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THE YELLOW FLAG.

LONDON :
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THE YELLOW FLAG.

A Novel.

By EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF 'A WAITING RACE,' 'BROKEN TO HARNESS,' ETC.

'That single effort by which we stop short in the downhill path to perdition is itself a greater exertion of virtue than an hundred acts of justice.' OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18 CATHERINE ST. STRAND.

1872.

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249. g. 256.

Cordially inscribed

TO

MY OLD FRIEND AND FELLOW-WORKER,

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

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THE YELLOW FLAG.

CHAPTER I.

CALVERLEY'S AGENT.

'So you have conquered your dislike to leaving England, Tom; I am very glad. I felt certain you would give-in to our wishes, and see the wisdom of what we suggested to you.'

'Well, I am not so certain about that, Ally; I don't go-in for magnanimity; and I believe there is just that touch of obstinacy in my nature, which would induce me to run counter to any proposition which was very hardly pressed. But when the suggestion was backed as it has been in this instance, I could not possibly doubt the sincerity of

those who made it. And so, as you see, I am off.'

The place where the conversation, of which a fragment has just been given, occurred, was a broad gravelled path, the favourite promenade of such of the worthy townspeople of Southampton as prefer the beauties of nature to the attractions of the shops in the High-street. On one side was the broad water glistening in the bright, cheerful October sun, on the other a large strip of greensward fringed on the farther edge by a row of shining, white-faced lodging-houses and hotels. On the promenade, the grim cannons—trophies taken during the Russian war—were surrounded by happy children, fearlessly climbing upon the now innocuous engines of death, within hailing distance of the shore a few boatmen were lazily pulling about, some young men were intent on watching the progress of two dogs who were making a neck-and-neck race for a stick which had been thrown into the water for them to fetch, and the whole scene was one of pleasant cheerfulness.

Not out of harmony with it were the two persons whose words have been recorded. The first speaker was a young woman about two-and-twenty, of middle height, with a slight and graceful figure, and with a face which, while some would have called it pretty, would have been pronounced agreeable by all. The features were not regular, the nose was decidedly not classical, the mouth was a little too large, and the lips were a little too full; but there was a wonderful charm in the whiteness and regularity of the teeth, in the bright flash of the hazel eyes, in the crisp ripples of the dark brown hair, and in the clear, healthy red and white of her complexion. She was very becomingly dressed in a black silk gown, a dark-gray jacket trimmed with velvet of the same colour, and a coquettish little black straw hat, and she wore perfectly-fitting gloves and boots. Her companion was some twelve years older, a short, squarely-built man, whose breadth of shoulders and length of arms showed much muscular power. The lower part of his face was covered with a thick copper-red

beard, the heavy moustaches falling over his mouth so completely as to defy any revelation which might be made by the movements of that tell-tale organ; but his eyes, small and set close together, had a shifty expression, and round them there was that strained, seared look, which in some men is always indicative of dissipation and late hours. He wore a travelling suit of gray tweed, and a wide-awake hat, and from under his beard the ends of a loosely-tied red silk neckerchief fluttered in the wind. Lounging along with a rolling gait, his hands buried in his jacket-pockets, he seemed to take but little heed of his companion or her conversation, but paid particular attention to various nursemaids in charge of the children who were playing about, honouring each of them in turn with a long, peculiar, and offensive stare.

He had half turned round to look after a particularly attractive damsel, when his companion, wishing to resume the conversation, touched him on the arm, and said, 'You will get to Ceylon in—'

'O yes, in so many weeks—what matters one or two more or less? It will be jolly enough on board ship, and when I arrive—I arrive.'

'I hope you have made up your mind to be steady, Tom, and to work hard. You have now the means for a capital start in life, and for my sake, if for nothing else, you ought to show yourself worthy of what has been done for you.'

'Look here, Ally, don't preach,' he said, turning sharply round to her; 'everybody thinks they can have a fling at me, and it is, "O Tom Durham this, and O Tom Durham that," until I am sick enough of it without being sermonised by my half-sister. Of course it was very kind of old Claxton—I beg your pardon,' he said with a sneer, as he saw a shade pass over her face; 'I ought to speak with more deference of your husband and my benefactor—of course it was very kind of Mr. Claxton to pay my passage out to Ceylon, and give me two thousand pounds to set myself up in business on my arrival there; but he is

a very long-headed fellow, and he knows I am no fool, and if the agency turns out rightly, he will get a very considerable profit on his outlay.'

'I am sure John has no such notion in doing this, Tom, and you have no right to impute such a motive to him.'

'I impute nothing; I merely suggested; and, after all, perhaps he only did it out of love for you, Ally, whom he worships as the apple of his eye, in order to give your reckless half-brother a chance of reform—and to get him out of his way,' he muttered under his breath.

'I am sure John is kindness itself,' said Alice Claxton. 'If there were nothing to prove that, it could be found in the fact of his wishing me to come down here to see the last of you.'

'Nothing like giving the old—I mean your husband, every possible credit, Ally. You know just now he is away on one of his regular tours, and that therefore he won't miss you from Hendon.'

'I know,' said the girl, half-pettishly, 'these horrible business-tours are the bane of my life, the only thing I have to complain about. However, John says he hopes it will not be very long before they are over, and then he will be always at home.'

'Does he?' said Tom Durham, looking at her keenly; 'I would not have you depend upon that, Ally; I would not have you ask him to give up the business which takes him away. It is important for him that he should attend to it for the present, and indeed until there is no longer a necessity for him to do so.'

'You need not speak so earnestly, Tom,' said Alice, with a half-laugh; 'I assure you I do not worry John about it; it is he who speaks about it much oftener than I do. He is constantly talking of the time when he shall be able to retire altogether, and take me away for a long foreign travel, perhaps to settle entirely abroad, he said, in Florence or Vienna, or some charming place of that kind.'

'Old idiot!' muttered Tom Durham; 'why can't he leave well alone?'

'I told him,' said Alice, not hearing or heeding the interruption, 'that I am perfectly content with Rose Cottage. All I wish is, that he could be more there to enjoy it with me.'

'Yes,' said Tom Durham, with a yawn. 'Well, that will come all right, as I told you; only don't you worry him about it, but leave it alone, and let it come right in its own way. Now look here, Ally. You had better go back to London by the 11.15 train, so that we have only half an hour more together.'

'But you know, Tom, John told me I might wait and see the Massilia start. Indeed, he particularly wished me to do so.'

'My dear child, the Massilia does not sail until half-past two; and if you waited to see me fairly off, you would not have time to get over to the railway to catch the three o'clock train. Even if you did, you would not get to town until nearly six, and you would have a long dreary drive in the dark to Hendon.

Now, if you go by the quarter-past eleven train, I shall see you off, and shall then be able to come back to Radley's, and write a few letters of importance before I go on board.'

'Very well, Tom,' said Alice; 'perhaps it will be better; only, John—'

'Never mind John on this occasion, Ally; he did not know at what time the Massilia sailed. Now, Ally, let us take one final turn, and finish our chat. I am not going to be sentimental—it is not in my line—but I think I like you better than anybody else in the world, though I did not take to you much at first. When I came back from sea, a boy of fifteen, and went home and found my father had married again, I was savage; and when he showed me a little baby lying in the cradle, and told me it was my half-sister, I hated you. But you were a sweet little child, and fended off many a rough word, and many a blow for the matter of that, which the governor would have liked to have given me, and I took to you; and when you grew up, you did me a good turn now and then, and of course it is

owing to you, one way or the other, that I have got John Claxton's two thousand pounds in my pocket at this moment. So I love you, and I leave you with regret, and I say this to you at parting. Take this envelope, and lock it away somewhere where it will be safe, and where you can lay your hand upon it at any moment. It contains the address of an old pal of mine—a friend I mean—one of the right sort, a staunch, tried, true, honest, upright fellow. Hardworking and persevering too; such a kind of man that you may be astonished at his ever having been intimate with me. But he was, and is, and I know that I may reckon upon him to the utmost. If ever you come to grief, if ever you are in trouble, no matter of what kind, go to the address which you will find there, and seek him out, and tell him all about it; I will warrant he will see you through it.'

'Thank you, dear Tom; it is very kind and thoughtful of you to say this, but you know I have John and—'

'Yes, of course, you have John now; but

there may be a time when—however, that is neither here nor there. There is the envelope, take it, and don't forget what I say. Now come round to the hotel and pack your bag; it is time for you to start.'

The bell rang, and with a scream the engine attached to the eleven-fifteen train for London forged slowly out of the Southampton station. Tom Durham, with an unusual expression of emotion on his face, stood upon the platform kissing his hand to Alice, who, with the tears in her eyes, leant back in the carriage and covered her face with her handkerchief. In a second-class compartment next to that which she occupied were two middle-aged, plainly-dressed men, who had been observing the parting of the half-brother and sister with some interest.

'Was not that Tom Durham?' said one, as the train sped on its way.

'Right you are,' said the other; 'I knew his face, but could not put a name to it. What

is he at now—working on the square or on the cross?'

'On the square, I believe,' said the first; 'leastways I saw him walking with Mr. Calverley in the City the other day, and he would not have been in such respectable company if he had not been all right.'

'I suppose not,' said the other man, 'for the time being; but Tom Durham is a shaky kind of customer anyways.'

CHAPTER II.

EXIT TOM DURHAM.

Mr. Durham remained watching the departing train until it had passed out of sight, when he turned round and walked quietly out of the station. The emotion he had shown—and which, to his great astonishment, he had really felt—had vanished, and left him in a deeply contemplative state. He pushed his arms half way up to his elbows in his pockets, and muttered to himself as he strode along the street; but it was not until he found himself in the sitting-room at Radley's Hotel, and had made himself a stiff glass of brandy-and-water from the bottle, duly included in the bill which Alice had paid, that he gave his feelings much vent. Then loading a short black pipe from a capacious tobacco-pouch, he seated himself

at the table, and as he went through his various papers and memoranda thought aloud.

'This is a rum start, and no mistake! Twenty years ago, when I left this very same place a 'prentice on board the old Gloucestershire, I never thought I should have the luck to stay in this swell hotel, and, better still, not to have to put my hand in my own pocket to pay the bill. It is luck, no doubt; a large slice of luck, larded with talent and peppered with experience. That's the sort of meal for a man that wants to get on in the world, and that's just what I have got before me. Now, when I walk out of this hotel, I shall have two thousand pounds in my pocket. In my pocket!—not to be paid on my arrival at Ceylon, as the old gentleman at first insisted. Ally was of great assistance there. I wonder why she backed me so energetically? I suppose, because she thought it would have been *infra dig.* for her brother to appear in the eyes of those blessed natives, over whom he is to exercise superintendence, as though he had not been considered worthy of being trusted

with the money, and she was delighted with the notion of bringing it down here herself and handing it to me.

'If I hadn't touched the money until my arrival at Ceylon, I should have had to wait a pretty long time. You're a dear old gentleman, Mr. Claxton, and you mean well; but I don't quite see the fun of spending the rest of my days in looking after a lot of niggers under a sun that would dry the life-blood out of me before my time. There is an old saying, that everyone must eat a peck of dirt in the course of their lives. Well, I ate mine early, took it down at one gulp, and I don't want any more of the same food. Besides, it is all very well for Ally to talk about gratitude and that kind of thing; but she does not know what I do, and it is entirely because I know what I do about my worthy brother-in-law, that I have been enabled to put the screw upon him, and to get out of him that very respectable bundle of bank-notes. That was just like my luck again, to find that out, and be able to bring it home to him so pat; di-

rectly I first got on the scent, I knew there was money in it, and I followed it up until I placed it chuck-a-block before him, and he parted freely. In such a respectable way, too. None of your extortion; none of your threatening letters; none of your "left till called for," under initials, at the post-office; none of your hanging about London spending money which nobody can imagine how you get, and thereby starting suspicions of other matters which might not come out quite so nicely if looked into. "Agent at Ceylon to the firm of Calverley and Company, brokers, Mincing-lane, London; iron-smelters and boiler-makers, Swartmoor Foundry, Cumberland;" that's what Thomas D. will have engraved on his card when he gets there; and the two thousand pounds, as John gravely remarked before Alice, were for fitting-up the office, and other necessary expenses. I wonder what that poor child thought the other necessary expenses could possibly be, to take such an amount of money?

'No, dear sir, thank you very much. I

am willing to allow that the whole thing was done extremely well, and without causing the smallest suspicion in the mind of little Ally; but you paid me the money because you could not help it, and you will have to pay me a great deal more for that very same reason. You're a very great scoundrel, John Claxton, Esquire; a much greater scoundrel than I am, though I have taken your money, and have not the remotest intention of becoming your agent in Ceylon. You're a cold-blooded villain, sir, carrying out your own selfish ends, and not, like myself, a generous creature, acting upon impulse. Notwithstanding the fact that I have your money in my pocket, I almost grudge you the satisfaction you will experience when, in the course of to-morrow or the next day, you will hear the news which will lead you to imagine that you are rid of me for ever. But I console myself with the reflection, that when I turn up again, as I undoubtedly shall, your disgust will be proportionately intensified.

'There,' as he selected two or three papers

from a mass before him and carefully tore the rest into pieces, 'there is the letter relating to the document which has already done so much for me, and which is to be my philosopher's-stone. I must not run the chances of wetting and spoiling that paper when I take my midnight bath, so I shall hand it over to Mrs. D. when I give her the money to take care of. May as well put a seal on it though, for Mrs. D. is naturally curious, and as jealous as a female Othello. One o'clock; just the time I promised to meet her. Now then, the money in this pocket, the letter in that, and the other papers torn up, and the brandy-bottle emptied. What you may call a clean sweep of the whole concern.'

After settling his hat to his satisfaction, and looking at himself in the glass with great complacency, Tom Durham strolled from the room, leaving the door wide open behind him. He nodded familiarly to a waiter whom he passed in the passage, but who, instead of returning the salutation, stared at him in wrathful wonder—they were unaccustomed to such

gentry at Radley's—and then he passed into the street. Looking leisurely around him, he made his way back again to the promenade on which he had held his conversation with Alice Claxton, and there, standing by one of the cannon, was another woman, apparently awaiting his arrival. A woman about thirty years of age, with swarthy complexion, bright beady black eyes, and dull blue-black hair. French, without doubt. French in the fashion of her inexpensive garments and the manner in which they were put on; undeniably French in her boots and gloves, in her gait, in the gesture and recognition which she made when she saw Tom Durham approaching her. That estimable gentleman, apparently, was displeased at this gesture, for he frowned when he saw it, and when he arrived at the woman's side, he said, 'Don't be so infernally demonstrative, Pauline; I have told you of that before.'

'Mais, should I stand like a stone or stock when you come before me?' said the woman, with the slightest trace of a foreign accent.

'I was longing to see you, and you came. Is it, then, astonishing—'

'No, all right; don't jaw,' said Tom Durham shortly. 'Only, in our position it is not advisable to attract more notice than necessary. Well, here you are.'

'Yes, I am here.'

'All goes well; I told you there was an old gentleman—Claxton by name—connected with Calverley's firm, for which I'm supposed to be going out as agent, from whom I could get a sum of money, and I have got it—he sent it to me.'

'Ah, ah, he sent it to you?'

'Yes, by—by a messenger whom he could trust; and this is not by any means the last that I shall have from him. He thinks I am off for the East, and that he is rid of me; but as soon as this sum is spent, he shall know the difference.'

'You have made the arrangements about that?'

'I have arranged everything. I saw the pilot; he told me it was blowing hard outside,

and that he shall pass the night off the Hurst. I have been on board, and seen exactly how best to do what I intend; and now there is nothing left but to give you your instructions.'

'Stay,' said the woman, laying her hand on his breast, and looking earnestly into his face. 'You are certain you run no risk; you are certain that—'

'Take your hand away,' he said; 'you will never understand our English ways, Pauline; the people here cannot make out what you are about. I am all right, depend upon it. I could swim four times the distance in much rougher weather; and even if there were any danger, the prize is much too great to chance the loss of it for a little risk. Don't be afraid, Pauline,' he added, with a little softening of his voice, 'but clear that quick, clever brain of yours and attend to me. Here is the bundle of bank-notes, and here is a letter which is almost as important; place them both securely in the bosom of your dress, and don't take them out for one instant until you hand

them over to me to-morrow morning at Lymington station—you understand?'

'Perfectly,' said the woman, taking the packets from him. 'What time will you be there?'

'By half-past seven, when the first train passes. We can loaf away the day on the beach at Weymouth—we might go over to Portland, if you have any fancy to see the place; I have not; all in good time, say I—and start for Guernsey by the midnight boat. Now is there anything more to say?'

'No,' said Pauline; then suddenly, 'Yes. Apropos of Portland, Wetherall and Moger were in this place to-day. I saw them at the station, in the train going up to town. They put their heads out of the window to look after you.'

'The devil!' cried Tom Durham; 'they were down here, were they, and you saw them? Why, what on earth were you doing at the station?'

'I arrived here too soon, and walked up there to pass the time.'

'Did you—did you see any one else?' asked Tom Durham, looking fixedly at her.

'Any one else? Plenty—porters, passengers, what not; but of people that I knew, not a soul,' answered the woman, raising her eyes and meeting his gaze with perfect calmness.

'That's all right,' he muttered; then louder, 'Now it's time for me to go on board. Goodbye, Pauline; make your way to Lymington, and look out for me at the station at seven-thirty to-morrow morning.'

As she stood looking after him, a hard, defiant expression came over the woman's face. 'Did I see any one else?' she said between her set teeth; 'yes, *mon cher*, I saw the pale, white-faced girl whom you held in your arms and kissed at parting, and who fell back into the carriage and cried like a baby, as she is. This, then, was the secret of your refusing to go to India with the money of this old fool whom you have robbed! Or rather whom she has robbed; for she was the messenger who brought it to you, and it is doubtless she who

has beguiled this dotard out of the bank-notes which she handed over to you, her lover. *Peste!* If that slavish love I have for you were not mixed with the dread and terror which I have learnt from experience, I would escape with this money to my own land, and leave you and your mignonne to make it out as best you might. But I am weak enough to love you still, and my revenge on her must wait for a more fitting opportunity.'

Her passion spent, Pauline gathered her shawl tightly round her and walked away towards the town.

On board the steam-ship Massilia matters had happened pretty much as Tom Durham had foreseen. That capital sample of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's fleet worked out of harbour at half-past two, and, in charge of a pilot, made her way slowly and steadily down Southampton Water. The wind freshened, and darkness coming on, the captain decided on anchoring off Hurst Castle for the night, and proceeding on his voyage

at daylight. This decision was greatly to the delight of the passengers, who had not yet shaken down into that pleasant companionship which such a voyage frequently brings about, and who, restless and strange in their unaccustomed position, were glad to seek their berths at a very early hour. During the afternoon's run Tom Durham had succeeded in creating for himself a vast amount of popularity. He chatted with the captain about nautical matters, of which he had obtained a smattering when he was apprentice on board the old East Indiaman; he talked to the lady passengers, deprecating their dread of sea-sickness, and paying them pleasant attention, while he smoked with the gentlemen, and took care to let them all know the important position which he occupied, as the agent of Calverley and Company. Never was there so agreeable a man.

At about one in the morning, when perfect quiet reigned throughout the ship, the passengers being asleep in their berths, the men, save those on duty, sound in the fore-

castle, and the echo of the watch-officer's footsteps dying away in the distance, Tom Durham suddenly appeared at the head of the saloon companion, and made his way swiftly towards the middle of the ship. He was dressed as in the morning, save that he wore no coat, and that instead of boots he had on thin light slippers. When he arrived opposite the huge half-circle of the paddle-box he stopped, and groping with his hands speedily found an iron ring, seizing which he pulled open a door, which revolved on its hinges, disclosing a wooden panel, which he slid back, and stepping through the aperture found himself standing on one of the broad paddles of the enormous wheel. In an instant he had pulled the first door back to its previous position, and stepping lightly from paddle to paddle stood on the nethermost one just above the surface of the water. He paused for a moment, bending down and peering out into the darkness, then raising his hands high up above his head and clasping them together, he dived down into the water, scarcely making a splash.

Ten minutes afterwards, one of the two men always on duty in the little telegraph hut under Hurst Castle, opened the door, and accompanied by a big black retriever, who was growling angrily, walked out into the night. When he returned, his companion hailed him from the little bedroom overhead.

'What's the matter, Needham—what's the dog growling about?'

'I thought I heard a cry,' said the man addressed; 'Nep must have thought so too, by the way he's going on; but I can see nothing. When I was out a few minutes ago I thought I saw something like a dog swimming near the Massilia, lying at anchor there, but it isn't there now. I doubt, after all, it may have been my fancy.'

'I wish you would keep your fancy to yourself, and not let it rouse me up,' growled his mate. 'One don't get too much rest in this blessed place at the best of times.'

CHAPTER III.

HOME, SWEET HOME.

FASHION, amidst the innumerable changes which she has insisted on, seems to have dealt lightly with Great Walpole-street. It may be that she has purposely left it untouched to remain an example of the heavy, solemn, solid style of a hundred years ago; a striking contrast to the 'gardens,' 'crescents,' 'mansions,' all stucco, plate-glass, and huge portico, of modern days; or it may be that finding it intractable, unalterable, unassailable, she has looked upon it as a relic of barbarism, and determined altogether to ignore its existence. However that may be, the street is little changed since the days of its erection; it still remains a long, and, to those gazing down it from either end, apparently interminable line of large, substantial, three-storied, dull-coloured brick houses, stretching from Chandos-square in the

south to Guelph Park in the north, so long, so uniform, so unspeakably dreary, as to give colour to the assertion of a celebrated wit, who, on his death-bed moaning forth that 'there is an end to all things,' added feebly, 'except Great Walpole-street.'

In its precincts gravity and decorum have set up their head-quarters; on many of its door-plates the passers-by may read the names of distinguished members of the faculty, old in age and high in renown, pupils of Abernethy and Astley Cooper, who with the first few hundreds which they could scrape together after their degrees were obtained, hired, and furnished, as a first step to professional status, the houses in which they still reside, and in which they have since inspected so many thousand tongues, and passed the verdict of life or death upon so many thousand patients. Youth must be resident here and there in Great Walpole-street, as in other places, but if so, it is never seen. No nursemaids with heads obstinately turned the other way drive the pleasant perambulator against

the legs of elderly people airing themselves in the modified sunlight which occasionally visits the locality; no merry children troop along its pavement; from the long drawing-room windows, hung with curtains of velvet and muslin, issues no sound of piano or human voice. Although there is no beadle to keep inviolate its sanctity, the street-boy as he approaches its confines stops his shrill whistling, and puts his tip-cat into his pocket; the 'patterers' of the second editions pass it by, conscious that the rumours of war, or of the assassinations of eminent personages, will fall flat upon the ears of the inhabitants; while even the fragmentary announcement, 'Elopement—young lady—noble markis,' will fail in extracting the pence from the pockets of the denizens of the lower regions in this respectable quarter.

It is essentially a carriage neighbourhood, with ranges of mews branching out of, and running parallel to it; and the vehicles are quite in keeping with the street and with their owners. Besides the doctors' broughams, high

swinging chariots, now scarcely ever seen save on drawing-room days or in carriage bazaars, with huge hammercloths and vast emblazoned panels, are there common enough. Roomy landaus, broad barouches, with fat horses, the leather of whose harness is almost invisible beneath the heavy silver plating, coachmen in curly white bob-wigs, and giant footmen gorgeous in hair-powder; all these are to be found in Great Walpole-street.

Money, money, money! it all seems to say. We have money, and we will take care that you shall know it. We will not pay enormous rents for poky tenements in Mayfair, or straggling caravanserais in Tyburnia; we do not expend our substance in park-phaetons or Victorias, any more than in giving 'drums' or 'at homes.' We have, during the season, several dinner-parties, at which the wine set before you does not come from the grocer's or the publican's, but has been in our cellars for years; several musical evenings, and one or two balls. We go to the Opera three or four times during the season, occasionally to the

theatre, frequently to a classical concert, or an oratorio; but we would as soon think of attending a prize-fight as a pigeon-match, or of prohibiting our womankind from going to church, as of taking them to listen to comic songs in a supper-room. We are rich, which you may be; but we are respectable, which you are not! Vaunt your fashion as much as you please, but the home of moneyed decency and decorum is Great Walpole-street.

Six o'clock on an October evening, with a chill damp wind howling at intervals through the funnel made by the opposing lines of houses, is not the time in which this locality looks its best. If it is dreary in the spring brightness, in the summer sunshine, it is doubly dreary in the autumn decadence, when the leaves torn from the trees in Guelph Park mix with the dust and bits of straw and scraps of paper which gather together in swerving eddies in every possible corner, and when in most of the houses the shutters are still closed, and the blinds have not shed the newspaper coverings in which they have been enwrapped

during the absence of the inhabitants. In one of the largest houses of the street, on one particular October evening, no such signs of absenteeism were visible; the whiteness of the broad door-step was unsullied, the plate-glass windows were free from speck or spot, the dwarf wire-blinds in the dining-room stood rigidly defiant of all criticism, and the muslin curtains in the drawing-room seemed to have lost all the softness and pliancy of their nature, and hung stiff, and white, and rigid, as the gaunt and bony hands which from time to time pushed them on one side, as the blank and colourless face which from time to time peered through them into the street. These hands and that face belonged to Mrs. Calverley, the mistress of the mansion. A thin, spare woman of fifty years of age, with a figure in which were angles where there should have been roundness, and straightness of outline where there should have been fulness. Her silk dress was of an undecided fawn-colour, and in place of any relieving white collar, she wore a wisp of black net

round her throat. Her face was long, with a large straight nose, prominent eyes of steely blue, and a long upper lip, between which and its thin pallid companion there gleamed a row of strong white teeth. Her thin scanty iron-gray hair was taken off from her forehead above the temples and gathered into a small knot at the back. Such an expanse of colourless flesh, such a dull level waste of human features unrelieved by the slightest scintilla of interest or sympathy!

In her prim, flat-soled creaking shoes, Mrs. Calverley walked to the window, pushed back the curtains, and looked out down the silent street; then, with a sound which was something between a sigh of despair and a snort of defiance, she returned to the low prie-dieu chair worked in wool, but covered with a shiny, crackling, yellow substance; and arranging her scanty drapery around her, interwove her bony fingers in her lap and sat bolt upright, staring rigidly before her. All the furniture in the room which was capable of being covered up was clad in a uniform of

brown holland; the chairs were dressed in pinafores, the big broad sofa had a loosely cut greatcoat of the same material; even the chandeliers had on holland bags. There was no light in the room, but the gas lamps in the street were reflected from the bare shining rosewood table, from the long grand pianoforte, from the huge ormolu clock ticking gravely on the mantelpiece, from the glass shades enshrining wax flowers and fruit, which made such a poor pretence of being real, and from the old-fashioned handsomely-cut girandoles. By the chair in which Mrs. Calverley was seated stood a frame of Berlin work; in the middle of the hearth-rug before the fireplace—fireless now, and filled with a grim pattern of cut coloured paper—lay a stuffed white-haired dog, intently regarding his tail through his glass eyes, and apparently wondering what he had done in life to be consigned to such a degraded position.

A quarter-past six, half-past, a quarter to seven, ring out from the neighbouring church, and at each sound of the chimes Mrs. Cal-

verley rises to her feet, creaks across to the window, looks forth, creaks back again, and resumes her stony position. At length there comes a half-timid ring of the bell, which she recognises at once, straightens her back, and settles herself more rigidly than ever. A few minutes after, the drawing-room door opens, and a voice, the owner of which cannot be seen, is heard saying, 'Dear me, all in darkness, Jane?'

Mrs. Calverley makes no reply, but rings the bell, and when the servant appears, says to him in a thin acid voice, 'You can light the gas, James; and now that your master has come home at last, dinner can be served.'

Upon this remark Mr. Calverley's only comment is a repetition of 'Dear me!' He is a middle-sized, pleasant-looking man, with fair hair slightly sprinkled with gray, gray whiskers, light-blue eyes, and marvellous pink-and-white complexion like a doll: a gentlemanly-looking man in his plain black frock-coat and waistcoat, gray trousers, black-silk

cravat and pearl pin, and neat buttoned boots. He looks rather nervously to his wife, and edges his way towards her round the table. When he is within a few feet of her he produces a newspaper from his pocket, and makes a feeble tender of it, saying, 'The evening paper, my dear; I thought you would like to see—'

'I should like to see you attempt to relieve the monotony of my life, Mr. Calverley, and not to leave me here alone, while you were doubtless enjoying yourself.'

'My dear, I assure you I have come straight home.'

'Did business detain you until after six o'clock in Mincing-lane?'

'No, my dear, of course not till six o'clock; I walked home, and on my way I just looked in at the club, and—'

'At the club!' That was all Mrs. Calverley said, but the manner in which she said it had its due effect. Mr. Calverley opened the leaves of a photograph album, with every portrait in which he was thoroughly familiar, and

began to be extremely interested in its contents.

'Dinner will be ready directly,' said Mrs. Calverley; 'had you not better wash your hands?'

'Thank you, my dear,' said the disconsolate man; 'but I washed them at the cl—'

He pulled himself up just in time; the obnoxious word had very nearly slipped out, but the servant announcing dinner at the moment, and Mrs. Calverley laying the tips of her bony fingers in the hollow of her husband's arm, the happy pair proceeded to the banquet.

It was a good dinner, handsomely served, but Mr. Calverley can scarcely be said to have enjoyed it. At first he audibly asked for wine, but after he had been helped three or four times, he glanced hurriedly across the long table, at the other end of which his wife was seated, and furtively motioned to the butler by touching his glass. This pantomime and its results were soon noticed by Mrs. Calverley, who, after glaring at her husband for a moment, gave a little shiver, and said:

'It is of no use paying Doctor Chipchase his fees if his advice is to be scouted in this manner; you know what he said about your drinking wine.'

'My dear, I only—'

'You only fly in the face of Providence, Mr. Calverley, and behave unjustly to the office in which your life is insured. You only add another to the long catalogue of weaknesses and moral cowardices, by the constant display of which you render my life a burden to me. I am sick of talking to you myself; I shall write and ask Martin to come and stay with us for a few weeks, and see what effect his influence will have upon you.'

'I am sure I shall be very glad to see Martin, my dear,' said Mr. Calverley, after standing up reverently to say grace on the removal of the cloth; 'he is a very good fellow, and—'

'Don't talk of a clergyman of the Church of England in that way, Mr. Calverley, if you please. "Good fellow," indeed! My son Martin is a good man, and an ornament to his calling.'

'Yes, my dear, of course he is; preaches an excellent sermon, does Martin, and intones quite musically. I should like to see him a little more cheerful, I mean a little less ascetic, you know; take his wine more freely, and not look quite so much as if he was fed upon parched peas and filtered water.'

'You are profane, as usual,' said his wife. 'Whenever you touch upon any member of my family, your temper gets the better of you, and your uncontrollable tendency to scoffing and scepticism breaks forth. Perhaps you will not think it too much trouble to pass me the biscuits.'

'My dear Jane!' murmured the wretched man; and after handing the silver biscuit-barrel to his wife, he sat by, not daring to help himself to another glass of wine from the well-filled decanters before him, while the mere fact of seeing her munching away at the hard farinaceous food nearly drove him mad with thirst.

When Mrs. Calverley had concluded this succulent repast, she rose from her seat, and,

without taking any notice of her husband, creaked stiffly out of the room. John Calverley, lover of ease and tranquillity as he was, scarcely regretted this little conjugal dispute, inasmuch as that if Mrs. Calverley had not, in consequence of the words that had passed between them, been on her dignified behaviour, she would have remained to lock up the wine. Whereas John managed to swallow two glasses of his favourite Madeira before he joined her in the drawing-room.

It was not very cheerful in the drawing-room. The gas had been turned low down, and the principal light in the room, much softened and shaded, came from a reading-lamp placed immediately above the work-frame at which Mrs. Calverley's bony fingers were busily engaged depicting the story of Jael, with a very rugged profile, and Sisera, the death-glare in whose eyes was represented by a couple of steel beads. John Calverley, furtively wiping his lips after the Madeira, shambled awkwardly into the room, and could scarcely repress a groan at the ghastliness of

its appearance. But the generous wine which he had drunk helped to cheer him a little; and after wandering to and fro in a purposeless manner, he approached his wife, and said:

'Won't you play something, dear?'

'No, thank you,' replied Mrs. Calverley; 'I wish to finish this work.'

'It is rather a nice thing,' said John, bending over the production, and criticising it in a connoisseur-like manner; 'what is it all about?'

'It is well that no one is here to hear this lamentable display of ignorance,' said Mrs. Calverley, with a snort. 'It is a scriptural story, Mr. Calverley, and is intended as a footstool for the Church of St. Beowulph.'

'O yes,' said John, nodding his head; 'I know—Bewsher's place.'

'It would be more decent, as well as more correct, to speak of it as the church in which Mr. Bewsher is officiating minister, I think,' said Mrs. Calverley with another snort.

'To be sure, my dear; quite correct,' said

peace-loving John. 'By the way, talking about officiating ministers, perhaps you had better not ask Martin to come to us just yet; I have got to go down to that place in the North next week.'

'What place in the North?' said Mrs. Calverley, looking up.

'What place? Why, my dear, Swartmoor, of course—the foundry, you know; that's the only place I go to in the North.'

'I don't know what place you do or do not go to in the North, or anywhere else, Mr. Calverley,' said his wife, sticking her needle into the canvas, and interlacing her bony fingers and sitting bolt upright, as she glared straight at him; 'I only know this, that I am determined not to stand this state of things much longer.'

'But, my dear—'

'Don't "my dear" me, if you please, but listen to what I have to say. When I married you, Mr. Calverley, to my sorrow, now some ten years ago, you were nothing more than the head clerk in the house of Lorraine Bro-

thers, which my grandfather had founded, which my father and uncles had established, and in which my late husband, Mr. Gurwood, had been a sleeping partner.'

'I must say that—'

'Silence, if you please; I will not be interrupted. I took you from that inferior position, and made you my husband. I made you master of this house and my fortune. I raised you, Mr. Calverley. I tell you, I raised you, sir, from obscurity to position, from comparative penury to wealth; and what is my reward? Day after day you are absent from home at your counting-house in Mincing-lane. I don't object to that; I suppose it is necessary; but I know—yes, I know, Mr. Calverley—this is not my first experience of men of business; I have been a grand-daughter, a daughter, and a sister of the firm, and though latterly Mr. Gurwood was not quite regular in his attendance, at least at one time he was an excellent man of business—so that I may say also the wife of the firm, and I know that business hours are over at five, and that my

sainted father used then to come straight home to Clapham by the omnibus.'

'I—'

'You must allow me to speak, if you please; I will not be interrupted. Instead of which, I find you going to your club and dawdling there to the latest minute, often keeping my dinner waiting; and when you return home, your conversation is frivolous, your manner light and flighty, and wanting in repose; your tastes and habits evidently unsuitable to a person in the position of my husband. I have borne all this without complaint; I know that all of us mortals—sinful mortals—have a cross to bear, and that you have been bestowed upon me in that capacity. But, be a lone deserted woman when I have a husband whose legitimate business it is to stay at home and take care of me, I will not. These Swartmoor works are all very well, I daresay, and I know you declare that they bring in a vast deal of profit; but there was profit enough in my father's time without any of your iron works; and if you intend to con-

tinue paying them a visit every fortnight, and staying several days away, as you have done lately, they shall be given up, Mr. Calverley—they shall be given up, I say. I may be of no more concern to you than a chair or a table, but I will not be a deserted woman, and these iron works shall be given up.'

Those who had seen but little of the pleasant-faced John Calverley, would scarcely have recognised him in the darkly-frowning man who now strode forward, and crossing his arms on the back of a chair immediately in front of his wife, said in a very quiet but very determined voice:

'They shall not be given up. Understand that once for all—they shall not be given up. You may say what you like, but I am master in my business, if not in my home, and they shall not be given up. And now, Jane, you must listen to me; must listen to words which I never intended to have said, if the speech you have just made had not rendered it necessary. You have told me what you have

pleased to call facts; now I will give you my version of them. When I married you ten years ago—and God knows you cannot deplore that marriage more heartily than I do—I was, as you say, the head clerk of the firm which your father had established. But in his latter days he had been ill and inattentive to business; and after his death your uncles, to whom the concern was left, proved themselves utterly inadequate to its guidance; and if it had not been for me, the firm of Lorraine and Company would have been in the Gazette. You know this well enough; you know that I, as head clerk, took the whole affair on my shoulders, reorganised it, opened out new avenues for its commerce, and finally succeeded in making it what it was when you first saw me. You taunt me with having been raised by you from penury to position; but you know that the whole of your fortune was embarked in the business, and that if it had not been for my clear head and hard work, you would have lost every penny of it. You accuse me of being light and frivolous

and unsuited to you, of being away from my home; though, except on these business expeditions, not an evening do I pass out of your society. In return, I ask you what sort of a home you make for me? what sign of interest, of comfort, of anything like womanly grace and feeling is there about it? What reception do I meet with on my return from business? what communion, what reciprocity is there between us? Every word I say, every remark I make, you either sneer or snap at. You are a hard, intolerant Pharisee, Jane Calverley. By your hardness and intolerance, by your perpetually nagging and worrying at him, you tried to break the spirit of your former husband, George Gurwood, one of the kindest fellows that ever lived. But you failed in that; you only drove him to drink and to death. Now I have said my say, have said what I never intended should pass my lips, what never would have passed them, if it had not been for your provocation. I wish you good-night—I am now going to the club.'

So saying, John Calverley bowed his head and passed from the room, leaving his wife no longer rigid and defiant, but swaying herself to and fro, and moaning helplessly.

CHAPTER IV.

PAULINE.

THE cold gray morning light, shining through the little window of a small bedroom in a second-rate hotel at Lymington, made its way through the aperture between the common dimity curtains, which had been purposely separated overnight, and fell on the slumbering figure of Pauline. The poor and scanty furniture of the room, with its dingy bed-hangings, its wooden washstand, two rush-bottomed chairs, and rickety one-sided chest of drawers, all painted a pale stone-colour, were in strong contrast with the richness of colouring observable in the sleeper,—observable in her jet-black hair, now taken from off her face and gathered into one large coil at the back of her head; in her olive complexion, sun-embrowned indeed, but yet show-

ing distinctly the ebb and flow of her southern blood; and in the deep orange-hued handkerchief daintily knotted round her neck. See, now, how troubled are her slumbers; how from between her parted lips comes a long though scarcely audible moan; how the strong thin hand lying outside the coverlet clutches convulsively at nothing; and how she seems in her unrest to be struggling to free herself from the thraldom of the troublous dream, under the influence of which part of the torture suffered by her during the previous day is again pressing upon her!

Yes; the woman with the pale tear-blurred face is there once again. Once again Tom Durham stands at the carriage-door, whispering to her with evident earnestness, until the guard touches him on the shoulder, and the whistle shricks, and then she bends forward, and he holds her for a moment in his outspread arms, and kisses her once, twice, thrice on her lips, until he is pulled aside by the porter coming to shut the door of the already-moving carriage, and she falls back in

an agony of grief. There is a moisture in his eyes too; such as she, Pauline, with all her experience of him, has never seen there. He is the lover of this pale-faced woman, and therefore he must die! She will kill him herself! She will kill him with the pearl-handled knife which Gaetano, the mate of the Italian ship, gave her, telling her that all the Lombard girls wore such daggers in their garters, ready for the heart of any Tedesco who might insult them, or any other girl who might prove their rival. The dagger is upstairs, in the little bedroom at the top of the house, overlooking the Cannebière, which she shares with Mademoiselle Mathilde. She will fetch it at once; and after it has served its purpose she will carry it to the chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde, and hang it up among the votive offerings: the pictures of shipwrecks, storms, sea-fights, and surgical operations; the models of vessels, the ostrich-eggs, the crutches left by cripples no longer lame, and the ends of the ropes by which men have been saved from drowning. How clearly

she can see the place, and all its contents, before her now! She will leave the dagger there: as the weapon by which a traitor and an Englishman has been slain, it will not be out of place, though Père Gasselin shake his head and lift his monitory finger. She will fetch it at once. Ah, how delicious and yet how strange seem to her the smell of the pot-au-feu, and the warm aroma of the chocolate! How steep the stairs seem to have become; she will never be able to reach the top! What is this, Pierre and Jean are saying? The sea has swept away the breakwater at La Joliette, and is rapidly rushing into the town! It is here; it is in the street below! Fighting madly with the boiling waters is one man—she can catch a glimpse of his face now. Grand Dieu, it is Tom! She will save him—no, too late, he is borne swiftly past, he is —

And with a short suppressed scream she woke.

It was probably the rapping of the chambermaid at the bedroom door which dissipated Pauline's dream, and recalled her to herself,

and it is certain that the chambermaid, whose quick ears caught the scream, went downstairs more than ever impressed with terror at the 'foreign person' whom she had scarcely had sufficient courage to conduct to her room on the previous evening. Notwithstanding the bizarre shape which they had assumed, these reminiscences of a portion of Pauline's past life had been so vivid, that it was with great difficulty she could clear her brain, and arrive at an idea of why she found herself in the dingy bedroom of a country inn, and of what lay before her. Sitting upon the edge of her bed, with her arms crossed upon her bosom, she gradually recalled the occurrences of the previous day, and came to comprehend what had been the key-note of her dream, and who was the pale-faced woman whose presence had so disturbed her. There was, however, no time for reflection at that moment; she had been aroused in accordance with instructions given on the previous night, and there was but little time for her to dress herself and make her way to the station, where she was

to await the arrival of her husband. Her toilet completed, she hurried downstairs, and declining to taste any of the substantial breakfast which the hearty Hampshire landlady was then engaged in discussing, and to which she invited her visitor, issued out into the broad street of the quiet old town.

Past the low-windowed shops, where the sleepy 'prentice-boys were taking down the shutters, and indulging in such fragmentary conversation as could be carried on under the eyes of their masters, which they knew were bent upon them from the upper rooms; past the neat little post-office, where the click of the telegraph-needles was already audible, and whence were issuing the sturdy country postmen, each with his huge well-filled leathern wallet on his back; past the yacht-builder's yard, where the air was redolent of pitch and tar, and newly-chipped wood, where through the half-opened gates could be seen the slender, tapering masts of many yachts already laid up for the season in the creek, and where a vast amount of hammering and sawing and

planing was, as the neighbours thought interminably, going on. Not but what the yacht-building yard is one of the great features of the place; for, were it not for the yacht-owners, who first come down to give orders about the building of their vessels; then pay a visit to see how their instructions are being carried out; and finally, finding the place comfortable, tolerably accessible, and not too dear, bring their wives and families, and make it their head-quarters for the yachting season, what stranger would ever come to Lymington? what occupants would be found for its lodging-houses and hotels?

The clock struck seven as Pauline passed through the booking-office at the railway station, and stepped out on to the platform. She looked hastily round her in search for Tom Durham, but did not see him. A sudden chill fell upon her as the remembrance of her dream flashed across her mind. The next instant she was chiding herself for imagining that he would be there. There was yet half an hour before the arrival of the train by

which they were to proceed to Weymouth; he would be tired by his long swim from the ship to the shore, his clothes would of course be saturated, and he would have to dry them; he would doubtless rest as long as he could in the place where he had found shelter, and only join her just in time to start. There was no doubt about his finding shelter somewhere; he was too clever not to do that; he was the cleverest man in all the world; it was for his talent she had chosen him from all the others years ago; it was for—and then Pauline's face fell, remembering that Tom Durham was as unscrupulous as he was clever, and that if this pale-faced woman were really anything to him, he would occupy his talent in arranging how and when to meet her in secret, in planning how to obtain farther sums of money from the old man whose messenger she had been.

How the thought of that woman haunted her! How her whole life seemed to have changed since she had witnessed that parting at the railway station yesterday! She felt

that it would be impossible for her to hide from Tom the fact that she was labouring under doubt and depression of some kind or other. She knew his tact and determination in learning whatever he thought it behoved him to find out; and she thought it would be better to speak openly to him, to tell him what she had seen, and to ask him for some explanation. Yes, she would do that. The train was then in sight; he would no longer delay putting in an appearance on the platform, and in a few minutes they would be travelling away to soft air and lovely scenery, with more than sufficient money for their present wants, and for a time at least with rest and peace before them. Then she would tell him all; and he would doubtless reassure her, showing her how silly and jealous she had been, but forgiving her because she had suffered solely through her love for him.

By this time a number of passengers had gathered together on the platform, awaiting the arrival of the train, and Pauline passed

hastily among them looking eagerly to the right and left, and, retracing her steps through the booking-office, opened the door and glanced up the street leading to the station. No sign of Tom Durham anywhere! Perhaps he had found a nearer station to a point at which he had swum ashore, and would be in the train now rapidly approaching.

The train stopped; two or three passengers alighted, and were so soon mixed up with the crowd of sailors, ship-carpenters, and farm-labourers rushing to take their seats, that Pauline could not distinguish them, but she knew Tom was not amongst them; and when she walked quickly down the line of carriages, throwing a rapid but comprehensive glance round each, she saw him not; and the train passed on, and she was left once more alone upon the platform.

Then, with frowning brows and set rigid lips, Pauline commenced walking up and down, covering with her long striding footsteps, so different from her usual easy, swimming gait, exactly the same amount of space

at every turn, wheeling, apparently unconsciously, at the same point, treading almost in the same prints which she had previously made, keeping her eyes steadfastly fixed on the ground, and being totally unaware of all that was passing around her. She was a clear-headed as well as a strong-willed woman, accustomed to look life and its realities boldly in the face, and, unlike the majority of her countrymen and women, swift to detect the shallowness of sophistry when propounded by others, and careful never even to attempt to impose upon herself. Throughout her life, so long as she could remember, she had been in the habit of thinking-out any project of importance which had arisen in her career while walking to and fro, just as she was doing then. It was perhaps the sameness of the action, perhaps some reminiscence of her dream still lingering in her mind, that turned her memory to the last occasion when she had taken such thoughtful exercise; and the scene exactly as it occurred rose before her.

The time, early morning, not much after

six o'clock; the place, the Prado at Marseilles; the persons, a few belated blue-bloused workmen hurrying to their work, a few soldiers lounging about as only soldiers always seem to lounge when they are not on duty, a limonadière with her temple deposited on the ground by her side, while she washes the sparkling tin cups in a gurgling drinking-fountain; two or three water-carts pounding along and refreshingly sprinkling the white dusty road, two or three English grooms exercising horses, and she, Pauline Lunelle, dame du comptoir at the Restaurant du Midi, in the Cannebière, pacing up and down the Prado, and turning over in her mind a proposition on the acceptance or rejection of which depended her future happiness or misery. That proposition was a proposition of marriage, not by any means the first she had received. The handsome, black-eyed, black-haired, olive-skinned dame du comptoir was one of the reigning belles of the town, and the Restaurant du Midi was such a popular place of resort, that she never

lacked admirers. All the breakfast-eaters, the smokers, the billiard-players, even the decorated old gentlemen who dropped in as regularly as clockwork every evening for a game of dominoes or tric-trac, paid their court to her, and in several cases this court was something more than the mere conventional hat-doffing or the few words of empty politeness whispered to her as she attended to the settlement of their accounts. Adolphe de Noailles—only a sous-lieutenant of artillery, to be sure, but a man of good family, and who, it was said, was looked upon with favour by Mademoiselle Krebs, daughter of old Monsieur Krebs, the German banker, who was so rich and who gave such splendid parties—had asked Pauline Lunelle to become his wife, had 'ah-bah-d' when she talked about the difference in their positions, and had insisted that in appearance and manner she was equal to any lady in the south of France. So had Henrich Wetter, head clerk and cashier in the bank of Monsieur Krebs aforesaid—a tall, fair, lymphatic young man, who, until his

acquaintance with Pauline, had thought of nothing but Vaterland and the first of exchange, but who professed himself ready to become naturalised as a Frenchman, and to take up his abode for life in Marseilles, if she would only listen to his suit. So had Frank Jenkins, attached to the British post-office, and in that capacity bringing the Indian mails from London to Marseilles, embarking them on board the Peninsular and Oriental steamer, and waiting the arrival of the return mail which carried them back to England—a big, jolly, massive creature, well known to everybody in the town as Monsieur Jenkins, or the 'courrier anglais,' who had a bedroom at the Hôtel de Paradis, but who spent the whole of his time at the Restaurant du Midi, drinking beer or brandy or absinthe—it was all the same to him — to keep the landlord 'square,' as he phrased it, but never taking his eyes off the dame du comptoir, and never losing an opportunity of paying her the most outrageous compliments in the most outrage-

ous French ever heard even in that city of polyglot speech.

If Pauline Lunelle had a tenderness for any of them, it was for the sous-lieutenant; at the Englishman, and indeed at a great many others—Frenchmen, commis-voyageurs, tradesmen in the city, or clerks in the merchants' offices on the Quai—she laughed unmercifully; not to their faces, indeed—that would have been bad for business, and Pauline throughout her life had the keenest eye to her own benefit. Her worth as a decoy-duck was so fully appreciated by Monsieur Etienne, the proprietor of the restaurant, that she had insisted upon receiving a commission on all moneys paid by those whose visits thither were unquestionably due to her attraction. But when they had retired for the night, the little top bedroom which she occupied in conjunction with Mademoiselle Mathilde would ring with laughter, caused by her repetition of the sweet things which had been said to her during the evening by her admirers, and her imitations of the manner and accents in

which they had been delivered. So Adolphe de Noailles had it all his own way, and Pauline had seriously debated within herself whether she should not let him run the risk of offending his family and marrying him out of hand (the disappointment to be occasioned thereby to Mademoiselle Krebs, a haughty and purse-proud young lady, being one of her keenest incentives to the act), when another character appeared upon the scene.

This was another Englishman, but in every way as different as possible to poor Mr. Jenkins — not merely speaking French like a Parisian, but salting his conversation with a vast amount of Parisian idiomatic slang, full of fun and wild practical jokes, impervious to ridicule, impossible to be put down, and spending his money in the most lavish and free-handed manner possible. This was Tom Durham, who had suddenly turned up in Marseilles, no one knew why. He had been to Malta, he said, on a 'venture,' and the venture had turned out favourably, and he was going back to England, and had de-

termined to enjoy himself by the way. He was constantly at the Restaurant du Midi, paid immense attention to the dame du comptoir, and she in her turn was fascinated by his good temper, his generous ways, his strange eccentric goings-on. But Tom Durham, laughing, drinking, and spending his money, was the same cool observant creature that he had been ever since he shipped as 'prentice on board the Gloucestershire, when he was fifteen years of age. All the time of his sojourn at the Restaurant du Midi he was carefully 'taking stock,' as he called it, of Pauline Lunelle. In his various schemes he had long felt the want of a female accomplice, and he thought he had at last found the person whom he had for some time been seeking. That she was worldly-wise he knew, or she would never have achieved the position which she held in Monsieur Etienne's establishment; that there was far more in her than she had ever yet given proof of, he believed; for Mr. Tom Durham was a strong believer in physiognomy, and had more than once found the

study of some use to him. Sipping his lemonade-and-cognac and puffing at his cigar, he sat night after night talking pleasantly with any chance acquaintance, but inwardly studying Pauline Lunelle; and when his studies were completed, he had made up his mind that he saw in her a wonderful mixture of headstrong passion and calm common sense, unscrupulous, fearless, devoted, and capable of carrying out anything, no matter what, which she had once made up her mind to perform. 'A tameable tiger, in point of fact,' said Tom Durham to himself as he stepped out into the street and picked his way across the filthy gutters towards his home; 'and if only kept in proper subjection, capable of being made anything of.' He knew there was only one way by which Pauline could be secured, and he made up his mind to propose to her the next night.

He proposed accordingly; but Pauline begged for four-and-twenty hours to consider her decision, and in the early morning went out into the Prado to think it all through,

and deliberately to weigh the merits of the propositions made respectively by Adolphe de Noailles and Tom Durham; the result being that the sous-lieutenant's hopes were crushed for ever — or for fully a fortnight, when they blossomed in another direction— and that Pauline, dame du comptoir no longer, linked her fate with that of Tom Durham. Thenceforward they were all in all to each other. She had no relatives, nor, as he told her, had he. 'I have not seen Alice for five years,' he said to himself; 'and from what I recollect of her, she was a stuck-up, strait-laced little minx, likely to look down upon my young friend the tiger here, and give herself airs which the tiger certainly would not understand; so, as they are not likely to come together, it will be better to ignore her existence altogether.' In all his crooked schemes, and they were many and various, Pauline took her share, unflagging, indefatigable, clear in council, prompt in action, jealous of every word, of every look he gave to any other woman; at the same time the slave

of his love and the prop and mainstay of his affairs. Tom Durham himself had not that quality which he imputed to his half-sister; he certainly was not strait-laced; but his escapades, if he had any, were carefully kept in the background, and Pauline, suspicious as she was, had never felt any real ground for jealousy until she had witnessed the scene at parting at the Southampton station.

The Prado and its associations had faded out of her mind, and she was trying to picture to herself the various chances which could possibly have detained her husband, when a porter halted before her, and civilly touching his cap, asked for what train she was waiting.

'The train for Weymouth,' she replied.

'For Weymouth!' echoed the porter; 'the train for Weymouth has just gone.'

'Yes, I know that,' said Pauline; 'but I was expecting some one—a gentleman—to meet me. He will probably come in time for the next.'

'You will have a longish waiting bout,'

said the man; 'next train don't come till two-forty-five, nigh upon three o'clock.'

'That is long,' said Pauline. 'And the next?'

'Only one more after that,' said the porter—'eight forty—gets into Weymouth somewhere between ten and eleven at night. You'll never think of waiting here, ma'am, for either of them. Better go into the town to one of the hotels, or have a row on the river, or something to pass the time.'

'Thank you,' said Pauline, to whom a sudden idea had occurred. 'How far is it from here to—how do you call the place—Hurstcastle?'

'To where, ma'am? O, Hurst Castle. I didn't understand you, you see, at first—you didn't make two words of it. It is Hurst Castle, where the king was kept a prisoner—him as had his head cut off—and where there's a barracks and a telegraph station for the ships now.'

'Yes,' she said, 'exactly; that's the place. How far is it from here?'

'Well, it's about seven mile, take it altogether; but you can't drive all the way. You could have a fly to take you four miles, and he'd bring you to a boat, and he'd take you in and out down a little river through the marshes, until you came to a beach, on the other side of which the castle stands. But, lor' bless me, miss, what's the use o' going at all, there's nothing to see when you get there?'

'I wish to go,' said Pauline, smiling. 'You see, I am a foreigner, and I want to see where your British king was kept a prisoner. Can I get a fly here?'

The porter said he would find her one at once, and speedily redeemed his promise.

Through neat villages and wooded lanes Pauline was driven, until she came to a large, bare, open tract of country, on the borders of which the fly stopped, and the flyman descending, handed her down some steps cut in the steep bank, and into an old broad-bottomed boat, where a grizzled elderly man, with his son, were busy mending an old duck-

gun. They looked up with astonishment when the flyman said, 'Lady wants to go down to have a look at the castle, Jack. I'll wait here, ma'am, until they bring you back.'

They spread an old jacket for her in the stern of the boat, and when she was seated, took to their oars and pulled away with a will. It was a narrow, intricate, winding course, a mere thread of shallow sluggish water, twisting in and out among the great gray marshes fringed with tall flapping weeds; and Pauline, already over-excited and overwrought, was horribly depressed by the scene.

'Are you always plying in this boat?' she asked the old man.

'Most days, ma'am, in case we should be wanted up at the steps there,' he replied; 'but night's our best time, we reckon.'

'Night!' she echoed. 'Surely there are no passengers at night-time?'

'No, ma'am, not passengers, but officers and sportsmen: gentlemen coming out gun-

ning after the ducks and the wild-fowl,' he added, seeing she looked puzzled, and pointing to a flock of birds feeding at some distance from them.

'And are you out every night?' she asked eagerly.

'Well, not every, but most nights, ma'am.'

'Last night, for example?'

'Yes, miss, we was out, me and Harry here, not with any customers, but by ourselves; a main dark night it was too; but we hadn't bad sport, considering.'

'Did you—did you meet any one else between this and Hurst Castle?'

'Well, no, ma'am,' said the old man with a low chuckle. 'It ain't a place where one meets many people, I reckon. Besides the ducks, a heron or two was about the strangest visitors we saw last night. Now, miss, here we are at the beach; you go straight up there, and you'll find the castle just the other side. When you come back, please shape your course for that black stump you see sticking up there; tide's falling, and we sha'n't be able

to bide where we are now, but we will meet you there.'

Lightly touching the old man's arm, Pauline jumped from the boat, and rapidly ascending the sloping head, found herself, on gaining the top, close by a one-storied, whitewashed cottage, in a little bit of reclaimed land, half garden, half yard, in which was a man in his shirt-sleeves washing vegetables, with a big black retriever dog lying at his feet. Accosting him, Pauline learned that the house was the telegraph station, whence the names of the outgoing and incoming ships are telegraphed to Lloyd's for the information of their owners. In the course of farther conversation the man said that the Masilia had anchored there during the night, had got her steam up and was off by daybreak; he took watch and watch with his comrade, and he turned out just in time to see her start.

Pauline thanked him and returned to the boat; but she did not speak to the old man on her return passage; and when she reached the fly which was waiting for her, she threw

herself into a corner and remained buried in thought until she was deposited at the station.

A few minutes after, the train bound for Weymouth arrived. Through confusion similar to that of the morning she hurried along, criticising the passengers on the platform and in the carriages, and with the same vain result. The train proceeded on its way, and Pauline walked towards the hotel with the intention of getting some refreshment, which she needed. Suddenly she paused, reeled, and would have fallen, had she not leant against a wall for support. A thought like an arrow had passed through her brain—a thought which found its utterance in these words:

'It is a trick, a vile trick from first to last! He has deceived me—he never intended to meet me, to take me to Weymouth or to Guernsey! It was merely a trick to keep me occupied and to put me off while he rejoined that woman!'

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE PARADISE.

THE place which Alice Claxton called her home, of which she was sole mistress, and which she dearly loved, was situate at Hendon. An old-fashioned, dreamy, by-gone kind of village, which, in these latter days, the Midland Railway has discovered to be a metropolitan suburb, and, as such, has brought it into vogue. Until within a very few years, however, it was one of the quietest places in England, visited occasionally in the summer by a few people from town, who found that Hampstead had been already almost swallowed up in bricks and mortar, and who extended their outing to get a little fresher air, and to enjoy the lovely view from Hendon Church. But its inhabitants generally were nothing-doing sort of people,

bred and born in the parish, who preferred vegetating on an income which enabled them to keep a pony-chaise, and gave them perpetual leisure for pottering in their gardens, rather than adventuring their little capital in speculations which might be disastrous, and which undoubtedly would be questionable.

The house where Alice Claxton lived was on the right-hand side of the way as you turn from the little main street of the village towards the church. There is no use in looking for it now; it has been pulled down, and on its site have been erected two brand-new stucco villas, with plate-glass windows and brass door-knockers, high flights of door-steps with a stone pine-apple on either side, and long strips of garden before and behind, which the landscape-gardener's art has decorated with beds in the shape of pears, and hearts, and crosses, and various other elegant and appropriate designs. But in Alice's days it was a long, low-roofed, one-storied house, built of bricks of a comfortable warm ruddiness, without being glaringly red, and covered all over

with a splendid Virginia creeper, which at this autumnal time was just assuming its loveliest hue. The rooms on the ground-floor were large, with rather low ceilings, and opening with French windows on a little paved terrace verandah-covered. It had been John Claxton's delight to suit the fittings and the furniture to the place for which they were destined. No modern stoves were to be found throughout it, but open fire-places inlaid with tiles, and iron dogs; the high-backed chairs, the broad table, and the heavy sideboard of the dining-room, were all in antique black oak; but in the drawing-room he had endeavoured to consult what he conjectured to be his wife's fancy, and the Venetian mirrors on the walls reflected the sheen of green silk and gold, with which the low quaint chairs and sofa and ottoman were covered, and produced endless repetitions of numerous tasteful specimens of glass and china with which the various étagères and whatnots were liberally covered. Alice, who before her marriage had been governess to the children of a Quaker wine-mer-

chant in York, whose drab furniture had done good service during three generations, clapped her hands in childish delight at the first glimpse of her new home, and immediately afterwards turning round, reproved her husband for his extravagance. But John Claxton, catching her in his arms, declared that it was only a little nest just fitted for his bright, shining, sweet little bird, and he earnestly prayed that she might be happy in it.

And she was happy; so happy that she sometimes felt her happiness was too great to be lasting, and that some reverse of fortune must be in store for her. But these flights of depression only happened when John was away on his business tours, and then only during the first half of his absence, for during the second she was busy in contemplating his return, and in devising all kinds of little expedients to show how welcome he was. See her now on this bright October evening, so neatly and becomingly dressed in her tightly-fitting mouse-coloured velveteen gown, fastened round the waist by a narrow black-

leather belt and buckle, with a linen collar round her pretty throat, and linen cuffs showing off her small white hands. She had filled every available ornament with the remnants of the summer garden produce, the last of the monthly roses, and the scarlet geraniums and calceolarias, and the earliest of the autumnal crop of dahlias, china-asters, and chrysanthemums. The air was chill without, but within the light from the wood logs flickered brightly on the plate and glass set on the snowy table-cloth, in anticipation of dinner, and the odour of the burning beech-wood was home-like and comforting. After giving a finishing touch to her flowers in the drawing-room, and again peeping into the dining-room to see that all was right and ready, Alice would open the glazed door and peer out into the darkness, would bend her head in eager listening for the sound of wheels entering the carriage-drive. After two or three experiments her patience was rewarded. First she heard the clanging of the closing gate, then the sound of the

rapidly approaching carriage, and the next minute she was in her husband's arms.

'Now come in, John, at once, out of that bitter wind,' she cried, as soon as she was released, which was not for a minute or two; 'it is enough to cut you in two. It has been sighing and moaning round the house all day, and I am sure I was thankful that you were coming home and hadn't to go any sea-voyages or other dreadful things.'

'Thank you, my darling, I am all right, I shall do very well now,' said John Claxton, in a chirping, cheery voice.

Why had Tom Durham called him old? There was a round bald place on the crown of his head to be sure, and such of his hair as remained and his whiskers were streaked with gray; the lines round his eyes and mouth were somewhat deeply graven, and the brow was heavy and thoughtful, but his bright blue eyes were full of life and merriment, the tones of his voice were blithe and musical, his slight wiry figure, though a very little bowed and stooping, was as iron in its hardness; and

when away from business he was as full of animal spirits and fun as any boy.

'I am all right, my darling,' he repeated, as, after taking off his hat and coat, he went with her into the dining-room; 'though I know it is by no means prudent to stand in draughts, especially for people of my age.'

'Now, John,' cried Alice, with uplifted forefinger, 'are you going to begin that nonsense directly you come into the house? You know how often I have told you that subject is tabooed, and yet you have scarcely opened your lips before you mention it.'

'Well, my dear,' said John Claxton, passing his arm round her and drawing her closely to him, 'you know I have an age as well as other people, and a good deal more than a great many, I am sorry to say; talking of it won't make it any worse, you know, Alley; though you may argue that it won't make it any better.'

'Silence!' she cried, stopping his speech by placing her hand upon his mouth. 'I don't care whether it makes it better or worse,

or whether it doesn't make it anything at all; I only know I won't have it mentioned here. Your age, indeed! What on earth should I do with you if you were a dandy in a short jacket, with a little cane; or a great hulking fellow in a tawny beard, such as one reads of in the novels?'

'I have not the least idea, Alley; but I daresay you would manage to spare some of your sweet love and kindness for me if I were either of the specimens you have mentioned. As I am neither, perhaps you will allow me to change my coat and wash my hands before dinner.'

'That you shall do. You will find everything ready for you; and as you have had a long journey, and it is the first time of your return, I insist on your availing yourself of the privilege which I gave you on such occasions, and on your coming down in your shooting-coat and slippers, and making yourself comfortable, John dear; and don't be long, for we have your favourite dinner.'

When Mr. Claxton appeared in the dining-

room, having changed his coat for a velvet shooting-jacket, and his boots for a pair of embroidered slippers, his wife's handiwork; having washed his hands and brushed-up his hair, and given himself quite a festive appearance, he found the soup already on the table.

'You are late, as usual, John,' cried Alice, as he seated himself.

'I went to speak to Bell, dear,' replied John Claxton; 'but nurse motioned to me that she was asleep; so I crept up as lightly as I could to her little bedside, and bent down and kissed her cheek. She is quite well, I hope, dear, but her face looked a little flushed and feverish.'

'There is nothing the matter with her, dear, beyond a little over-excitement and fatigue. She has been with me all day, in the greatest state of delight at the prospect of your return, helping me to cut and arrange the flowers, to get out the wine, and go through all the little household duties. I promised her she should sit up to see her papa; but little fairies of three or four years of age have not

much stamina, and long before the time of your return she was dropping with sleep.'

'Poor little pet! Sleep is more beneficial to her than the sight of me would have been, though I have not forgotten to bring the doll and the chocolate creams I promised her. However, the presentation of those will do well enough to-morrow.'

The dinner was good, cosey, and delightful. They did not keep the servant in the room to wait upon them, but helped themselves and each other. When the cloth was removed, Alice drew her chair close to her husband, and according to regular practice poured out for him his first glass of wine.

'Your own particular Madeira, John,' she said; 'the wine that your old friend Mr. Calverley sent you when we were first married. By the way, John, I have often wanted to ask you what you drink at the hotels and the horrible places you go to when you are away—not Madeira, I am certain.'

'No, dear, not Madeira,' said John Clax-

ton, fondly patting her cheek; 'wine, beer, grog—different things at different times.'

'Yes, but you never get anything so good as this, confess that?'

'Nothing that I enjoy so much, certainly; whether it is the wine, or the company in which the wine is drunk, I leave you to guess.'

'O, it is the wine, I am sure! there is no such other wine in the world, unless Mr. Calverley has some himself. There now, talking of Mr. Calverley reminds me that you never have asked about Tom—about Tom, John—are you attending to what I say?'

'I beg your pardon, dear,' said John Claxton, looking upward with rather a flushed face, and emptying his glass at a draught. 'I confess my thoughts were wandering towards a little matter of business which had just flashed across me.'

'You must put aside all business when you come here; that was a rule which I laid down at first, and I insist on its being adhered to. I was telling you about Tom, my brother, you know.'

'Yes, dear, yes, I know—you went to Southampton to see him off.'

'Yes, John; that is to say, I went to Southampton and I saw him there, but I did not actually see him off—that is, see him sail, you know.'

'Why, Alice, you went to Southampton for the express purpose!'

'Yes, John, I know; but, you see, the trains did not suit, and Tom thought I had better not wait; so I left him just an hour or two before the steamer started.'

'I suppose he *did* go,' said John Claxton anxiously; 'there is no doubt about that, I hope?'

'Not the least in the world, not the smallest doubt. To tell you the truth, John, I was rather anxious about it myself, knowing that Tom had the two thousand pounds which you sent him by me, you dear, kind, good fellow, and that he is—well, perhaps not quite so reliable as he might be—but I looked in the newspaper the next day, and saw his name as

agent to Calverley and Company among the list of outgoing passengers.'

'Did he seem tolerably contented, Alice?'

'O, yes, John; he went away in great spirits. I am in hopes that he will settle down now, and become a steady and respectable member of society. He has plenty of talent, I think, John, don't you?'

'Your brother has plenty of sharp, shrewd insight into character, and knowledge of the wickedness of the world, Alice,' said Mr. Claxton somewhat bitterly; 'these are not bad as stock-in-trade for a man of his nature, and I have no doubt they will serve his turn.'

'Why, John,' said Alice, with head upturned to look at him more closely, 'how cynically you are speaking! Are you not well, dear?'

'Quite well, Alice. Why do you ask?'

'Your face is rather flushed, dear, and there is a strange look in your eyes, such as I have never noticed before. O, John! I am certain you work too hard, and all this travel-

ling is too much for you. When will you give it up?'

'When I see my way to settling down here in peace and comfort with you, my darling, and little Bell. Depend upon it, when that opportunity comes I shall grasp it eagerly enough.'

'And when will it come, John?'

'That, my child, it is impossible to say; it may come sooner than we expect; I hope it will, I'm sure. It is the one thing now, at the close of my life, left me to look forward to.'

'Don't talk about the close of your life in that wicked way, John. I am sure if you only take care of yourself when you are away on those journeys, and mind that your bed is always aired, and see that you have proper food, there is no question about the close of your life until you have seen little Bell grown up into a marriageable young woman.'

'Poor little Bell,' said John Claxton, with a grave smile; 'dear little Bell. I don't think we did wrongly, Alice, in adopting this little fatherless, motherless waif?'

'Wrong, indeed! I should think not,' said Alice quickly. 'Even from a selfish point of view it was one of the best things we ever did in our lives. See what a companion she is to me while you are away; see how the time which I have to spare after attending to the house, and my garden, and my reading, and my music, and all those things which you insist upon my doing, John, and which I really go through conscientiously every day; see how the spare time, which might be dull, is filled up in dressing her, and teaching her, and listening to her sweet little prattle. Do you think we shall ever find out whose child she was, John?'

'No, dear, I should say not. You have the clothes which she had on, and the little gold cross that was found round the mother's neck after her death; it is as well to keep them in case any search should be made after the child, though the probability of that is very remote.'

'We should not give Bell up, whatever search might be made, should we, John?' said

Alice quickly. The poor mother is dead, and the search could only originate with the father, and it is not likely that after leaving the mother of his child to die in a workhouse bed, he will have any long-deferred stings of conscience to make him inquire as to what has become of her offspring. O, John, when I think of the wickedness that goes on in the world, through men, John, through men alone—for women are but what men choose to make them—I am so thankful that it was given to me to win the honest, noble love of an honourable man, and to be removed in good time from the temptations assailing a girl in the position which I occupied. Now, John, no more wine!'

'Yes,' he cried, 'give it to me quickly, full, full to the brim, Alice. There!' he said, as he drained it; 'I am better now; I wanted some extra stimulant to-night; I suppose I am knocked-up by my journey.'

'Your face was as pale then as it was flushed before, John. I shall take upon myself to nurse you; and you shall not leave

home again until you are quite recovered, whatever Mr. Calverley may say. You should have him here, some day, John, and let me talk to him. I warrant I would soon bring him round to my way of thinking.'

'Your ways are sufficiently coaxing to do that with anybody, Alice,' said John Claxton, with a faint smile; 'but never mind Mr. Calverley just now; what were we saying before?'

'I was saying how pleased I was to be removed from the temptations to which a girl in the position which I held is always exposed.'

'No,' said Claxton, 'I don't mean that—before.'

'Yes, yes,' said Alice, 'I insist upon talking about these old times, John; you never will, and I have no one else who knows anything about them, or can discuss them with me. Now, do you recollect,' she continued, nestling closer to him, 'the first time you saw me?'

'Recollect it! As you were then, I can see you now.'

'And so can I you; you are not altered an atom. You were standing at a bookstall in Low Ousegate, just beyond the bridge, looking into a book; and as I passed by with the two little Prestons you raised your eyes from the book, and stared at me so hard, and yet so gravely, that I—'

'That you were quite delighted,' said John Claxton, putting his arm round her; 'you know that; so don't attempt a bashfulness which is foreign to your nature, but confess at once.'

'I decline to confess any such thing,' said Alice. 'Of course I was in the habit of being stared at by the officers and the young men of the town. Come now, there is the return blow for your impertinent hit just now; but one scarcely expects to create an impression on people whom one finds glozing over bookstalls.'

'Elderly people, you should have said, Alice.'

'Elderly people, I will say, John, if it pleases you. Much less does one expect to

see them lay down the book, and come sailing up the street after one in direct pursuit.'

'O, you saw that, did you, miss? You never told me that before.'

'Saw it, of course I saw it; what woman ever misses anything of that kind? At a distance you tracked me straight to Mr. Preston's door; saw me and my little charges safely inside; and then turned on your heel and walked away.'

'While you went up to your room and sat down before your glass, admiring your own charms, and thinking of the dashing young cavalier whose attention you had just attracted. Was that it?' said John.

'Nothing of the sort; though I don't mind confessing that I did wonder whether I should ever see you again. And then, two days after, when Mrs. Preston told me to take the little girls into the drawing-room in the evening, and to be sure that they practised thoroughly some piece which they would be called upon to play, as there was a gentleman coming to dinner who doated on little

children, how could I have the slightest idea that this benevolent Mr. Claxton was to be my friend of the Low Ousegate bookstall? And yet you scarcely spoke to me once during that evening, I remember.'

'That was my diplomacy, my child; but I paid great attention to Mrs. Preston, and was very favourably received by her.'

'Yes; I heard Mr. Preston say to Mr. Arthur, as they stood behind the piano, "He's of the house of Calverley and Company of Mincing-lane. Thee hast heard of it? Its transactions are enormous."'

'And I won Mr. Preston's heart by a good order for wine,' said John Claxton; 'and then I threw off all disguise, and I am afraid made it clear that I had only made his acquaintance for the sake of paying court to his governess.'

'You need have very little delicacy in that matter, John,' said Alice. 'Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Preston had the slightest interest in me, and when I left they cared not what became of me. I suited them as a governess,

and they were angry when I first told them I was going away; but when they saw that I had fully made up my mind, their sole thought was how best to supply my place. As to what became of me, that was no concern of theirs.'

'No,' said John Claxton, whose colour had returned, and who seemed to have regained his ordinary composure, 'no concern perhaps of either Mr. or Mrs. Preston; but what about the young gentleman you mentioned just now, Alice—Mr. Preston's nephew, Mr. Arthur, as he was called? Your decision as to the future course of life you intended to adopt was not quite so immaterial to him, was it, child?'

'What do you mean, John?' said Alice, looking down, as the blood began to mount into her cheeks.

'You know well enough what I mean, child—exactly what I say. Mr. Arthur Preston took great interest in you—was in love with you, in point of fact. Is not that so?'

'He said so, John; but his actions belied

his words. No man who had any real honest love—nay, more, I will go farther, and say respect, for a girl—could have spoken or acted towards me as he did.'

'Why, Alice,' said John Claxton, looking with surprise at her flushed cheeks, 'you never told me anything of this before. Why have you kept it secret from me?'

'Because I know, John,' said Alice, laying her hand upon his shoulder, 'that, however outwardly calm and quiet you may appear to be, however sensible and practical you are in most matters, you have a temper which, when anything touching my honour or my dignity is involved, is quite beyond your control. I have seen its effects before, John, and I dreaded any repetition of them.'

'Then why do you tell me now?'

'Because we are far away from York, John, and from Arthur Preston and his friends, and there is no likelihood of our seeing any of them again; so that I know your temper can be trusted safely now, John; for, however

much it may desire to break out, it will find no object on which to vent itself.'

'This conversation and conduct, then, of Mr. Arthur Preston were matters, I am to understand, in which your honour and dignity were involved, Alice?'

'To a certain extent, John, yes,' faltered Alice.

'I should like to know what they were,' said John Claxton. 'I put no compulsion on you to tell me. I have never asked you since our marriage to tell me anything of your previous life; but I confess I should like to know about this.'

'I will tell you, John,' said Alice; 'I always intended to do so. It is the only thing I have kept back from you; and often and often, while you have been away, have I thought, if anything happened to you or to me—if either of us were to die, I mean, John—how grieved I should be that I had not told you of this matter. Arthur Preston pretended he loved me; but he could not have done so really. No man who is wicked

and base can know what real love is, John; and Arthur Preston was both. Some little time before I knew you, he made love to me —fierce, violent love. I had not seen you then, John; I had scarcely seen any one. I was an unsophisticated country girl, and I judged of the reality of his love by the warmth of his professions, and told him I would marry him. I shall never forget that scene. It was one summer's evening, on the river bank just abreast of Bishopthorpe. When I mentioned marriage he almost laughed, and then he told me, in a cynical sneering way, that he never intended to be married unless he could find some one with a large fortune, or with peculiar means of extending his uncle's business when he inherited it; but that meanwhile he would give me the prettiest house within twenty miles. I need not go on. He would not make me his wife, but he offered to make me his mistress. Was it not unmanly in him, John? Was it not base and cowardly?'

She stopped and looked at her husband.

But John Claxton, whose face had become pale again, his chin resting on his hand, and his eyes glaring into the fire, made her no reply.

CHAPTER VI.

A SAFE INVESTMENT.

'THE second-floor front have come in, Ben,' said Mrs. Mogg, of 19A Poland-street, as she opened the door to her husband on a wet and windy autumnal evening; 'she have come and brought her luggage—a green carpet-bag with a poll-parrot worked on it, and a foreign-looking bandbox tied up in a handkerchief. She's French, Ben, that's what she is.'

'Is she?' said Mr. Mogg shortly. 'Well, I'm hungry, that's what I am; so get me my tea.'

He had had a long and dirty walk home from the West-India Docks, where he was employed as a warehouseman, and chattering in a windy passage about his wife's lodger scarcely seemed to him the most desirable way of employing his first moments at home.

But after dispatching two large breakfast-cups of tea, and several rounds of hot salt-buttered toast, from which the crust had been carefully cut away, Mr. Mogg was somewhat mollified, and wiping his mouth and fingers on the dirty tablecloth, felt himself in cue to resume the conversation.

'O, the new second-floor has come, Martha, has she?' he commenced; 'and she's French, you think. Well,' continued Mr. Mogg, who was naturally rather slow in bringing his ideas into focus, 'Dickson may or may not be a French name. That it's an English one, we all know; but that's no reason that it should not be a French one too, there being, as is well known, several words which are the same in both languages.'

'She wrote down "P. Dickson" when she came to take the rooms this morning, and I see P. D. worked on her purse when she took it out to pay the first week's rent in advance,' said Mrs. Mogg.

'Then it's clear enough her name is Dickson,' said Mr. Mogg, with a singular facility

of reasoning. 'What should you say she was, now, Martha—you're good at reckoning 'em up, you are—what is the second-floor front, should you say?'

'Either a gov'ness or a lady's-maid out of place,' said Mrs. Mogg decisively. 'I thought she was a gov'ness until I see the sovereigns in her purse, and then made up my mind she was a lady's-maid as had given up her place either through a death, or the family going abroad or giving up housekeeping; and these were the sovereigns which she had just got from the wardrobe-shop for the perquisites and etceteras which she had brought away with her.'

'You're a clear-headed one, you are,' said Mr. Mogg, looking at his wife with great delight. 'Has she had anything to eat?'

'O yes,' said Mrs. Mogg, giggling with some asperity; 'she brought a lettice in with her, I suppose; for when I went up to ask her whether I should get-in any little trifle for breakfast, I found her eating of it,

and dropping some lumps of sugar into a tumbler of water.'

'Well, that's beastly,' said Mr. Mogg. 'These foreigners are disgusting in their ways, one always heard; but how did you make her understand you about breakfast?'

'Lor' bless yer, man, she speaks English first-rate—so well, that when I first see her, I thought she was a countrywoman of mine from Norfolk.'

'Well, so long as she pays regularly, and don't stop out late at night, it don't matter to us where she comes from,' said Mr. Mogg, stretching out his arms and indulging in a hearty yawn. 'Now, Martha, get me my pipe; and when you have cleared these things away, come and sit down, and let's have a quiet talk about how we are to get rid of the German teacher in the back attic.'

The newly-arrived tenant of the second floor, whom these worthies in the kitchen were thus discussing, was walking up and down her room in much the same manner as she had paced the platform at Lymington or

the Prado at Marseilles. It was very lucky that the occupant of the drawing-room—a gentleman who taught noblemen and senators the art of declamation—had not on that evening one of his usual classes, in which budding orators were accustomed to deliver Mark Antony's speech over the sofa-pillow transformed for the nonce into the dead body of Cæsar, and where, to encourage his pupils, the professor would set forth that his name was Norval, and proceed to bewail the bucolic disposition of his parent, or the grinding sound of the heels above would have sadly interfered with the lesson. It was well that Pauline was not interrupted; for the demon of rage and jealousy was at work within her. The burning shame consequent on the belief that she had been deceived and made a fool of, nearly maddened her; and as every phase of the deceit to which she now imagined she had fallen so ready a victim rose before her mind, she clasped her arms above her head and groaned aloud.

'To think,' she cried, 'that I, who had

known him so long and so intimately—I, who had been his companion in his plottings and intrigues, who had sat by, night after night and day after day, watching the patience and skill with which he prepared the pitfalls for others,—that I should be so blind, so weak, so besotted, as to fall into them myself! Lies from the first, and lie upon lie! A lie to the man Calverley, whose agent he pretended he would be; a lie to the old man Claxton, who obtained the place for him, and sent him the money by the pale-faced woman; then a lie to me,—a cleverer kind of lie, a lie involving some tracasserie, for I am not one to be deceived in the ordinary manner. To me he admitted he intended playing false with the others; and now I am reckoned among those whom he has hoodwinked and befooled!

'The notion that came across me at that place! It must be true! He never meant to come there; he sent me on a fool's errand, and he would never be within miles of the spot. The whole thing was a trick, a well-planned trick, from the first; well-planned,

and so plausible too! The flight to Weymouth, then to Guernsey; hours of departure of trains and steamer all noted and arranged. What a cunning rogue! What a long-headed plausible rascal! And the money, the two thousand pounds — many would be deceived by that. He thought I would argue that if he had intended to leave me, he never would have handed over to me those bank-notes.

'But I know him better. He is a vaurien, swindler, liar; but though I suppose he never loved me in the way that other people understand love, I have been useful to him, and he has become used to me; so used, that he cannot bear to think of me in misery or want. So he gave me the money to set his mind at ease, that my reproachful figure should not rise between him and his new-found happiness. Does he think that money can compensate me for the mental agony that I shall suffer always, that I suffer now? Does he think that it will salve my wounded pride, that it will do away with the misery and degradation I feel? And having been cheated

by a shallow artifice, will money deprive me of my memory, and stop the current of my thoughts? Because I shall not starve, can money bereave me of my fancies, or keep away mental pictures it will drive me mad to contemplate? I can see them all now; can see him with her; can hear the very phrases he will use, and can imagine his manner when he talks of love to her. How short a time it seems since I listened to those burning words from the same lips! How well I remember each incident in the happy journey from Marseilles, the pleasant days at Genoa, the long stay at Florence! Where has he gone now, I wonder? To what haunt of luxury and ease has he taken his new toy? Fool that I am to remain here dreaming and speculating, when I want to know, when I must know! I must and will find out where they are; and then quickness, energy, perseverance—he has praised them more than once when they served him—shall be brought into play to work his ruin.'

At this point in her train of thought

Pauline was interrupted by a knock at the door of her room. Starting at the sound, she raised her head and listened eagerly; but whatever fancy she may have indulged in as to the idea as to who might be her visitor, was speedily dispelled by hearing the short sniff and the apologetic cough with which Mrs. Mogg was wont to herald her arrival; and being bade to come in, that worthy woman made her appearance, smiling graciously. It was Mrs. Mogg's habit to fill up such leisure as her own normal labour and active superintendence of the one domestic slave of the household, known as 'Melia,' permitted her, in paying complimentary calls upon her various lodgers, apparently with the view of looking after their comforts and tendering her services, but really with the intention of what she called 'taking stock' of their circumstances, and making herself acquainted with any peculiarities likely, in her idea, to affect the question of her rent. Having thoroughly discussed with her husband the possibility of getting rid of the German teacher, and

it being pleasantly arranged between them that the unfortunate linguist was to be decoyed into the street at as early a period as possible on the ensuing morning, and then and there locked out, his one miserable little portmanteau being detained as a hostage, Mrs. Mogg was in excellent spirits, and determined to make herself agreeable to her new lodger.

'Good evening, ma'am,' she commenced; 'time being getting late, and this being your first night under our humble roof, I took the liberty of looking in to see if things was comfortable, or there was anything in the way of a Child's night-light or that, you might require.'

Almost wearied out with the weight of the wretched thoughts over which, for the last forty-eight hours, she had been brooding, Pauline felt the relief even of this interruption, and answered graciously and with as much cheerfulness as she could assume. 'The room was comfortable,' she said, 'and there was nothing she required; but would not madame sit down? She seemed to be always

hard at work, and must be tired after climbing those steep stairs. Perhaps she would not object to a little refreshment?'

Mrs. Mogg's eyes gleamed as from her neat hand-bag Pauline produced a small silver flask, and pouring some of its contents into a tumbler, handed the water-bottle to her landlady, to mix for herself.

'Thank you, ma'am,' said Mrs. Mogg, seating herself on one of the two rush-bottomed chairs, and smoothing her apron over her lap with both her hands. 'It is a pull up the stairs after one's been hard at it all day, and a little drop of comfort like this does one no harm, whatever they may say against it, more especially when it's like this, and not the vitriol and mahogany-shavings which they sell by the quartern at the Goldsmith's Arms. You didn't bring this from France with you, did you, ma'am?'

'O no,' said Pauline, with a half smile. 'It is a long time since I left France.'

'Ah, so I should think,' said Mrs. Mogg, 'by your civilised ways of going on, let alone

your speaking our language so capital. Mogg, meaning my husband, was in France once, at Boolong, with the Foresters' excursion, and thought very high of the living he got during the two hours he was there.'

'Ah, you have a husband,' said Pauline, beginning to lapse into dreariness.

'O yes, ma'am, and as good a husband as woman could wish, a hard-working man, and taking no holidays save with the Foresters to the Crystal Palace, Easter Mondays, and such-like. He's in the docks is Mogg.'

'In the docks,' said Pauline; 'he would know, then, all about ships?'

'O no, ma'am,' said Mrs. Mogg, with a slight toss of the head; 'that's the Katherine's Docks you are thinking of, where the General Steam goes from. Mogg is in the West-Injia Docks: he's in the sale-room — horns and hides, and other foreign produce.'

'Then he has nothing to do with ships?'

'Nothing at all, ma'am. It would be easier work for him if he had, though more outdoor work; but his is terrible hard work,

more especially on sale days. He's regular tired out to-night, poor man; for to-day has been a sale day, and Mogg was at it from morning till night, attending to Mr. Calverley's consignments.'

'Mr. Calverley!' cried Pauline, roused at last; 'do you know him?'

'O no, not I, ma'am,' said the landlady, 'only through hearing of him from Mogg. He's one of the largest merchants in horns and hides is Mr. Calverley, and there is never a shipload comes in but he takes most of it. Mogg has done business for him—leastways for the house, for when Mogg knew it first Mr. Calverley was only a clerk there—for the last thirty years.'

'Is Mr. Calverley married?'

'O yes, ma'am. He married Mrs. Gurwood, which was Miss Lorraine before she married Mr. Gurwood, who killed himself with drink and carryings-on. A pious lady, Mrs. Calverley, though haughty and stand-offish, and, they do say, keeping Mr. C.'s nose to the grindstone close.'

'And Mr. Calverley, what is he like?'

'Not much to look at, ma'am, but the kindest and the best of men. My nephew Joe is light-porter in their house; and the way in which Mr. Calverley behaves to him—half-holiday here, half-a-crown there, Christmas-boxes regular, and cold meat and beer whenever he goes up to the house—no tongue can tell. Likewise most bountiful to Injuns and foreigners of all kinds, Spaniards and that like, providing for children and orphans, and getting them into hospitals, or giving them money to go back to their own country.'

'Where is Mr. Calverley's address — his business address; his office I mean?'

'In Mincing-lane, in the City, ma'am. It's as well known as the Bank of England, or the West-Injia Docks themselves. May I make so bold as to inquire what you want with Mr. Calverley, ma'am?' said Mrs. Mogg, whose curiosity, stimulated by the brandy-and-water, was fast getting the better of her discretion; 'if it's anything in the horn and hide way,' she added, as the notion of something to be

made on commission crossed her mind, 'I am sure anything that Mogg could do he would be most happy.'

'No, thank you,' said Pauline coldly; 'my inquiry had nothing to do with business.'

And shortly after, Mrs. Mogg, seeing that her lodger had relapsed into thought, and had replaced the silver flask in her hand-bag, took her departure.

'What that Frenchwoman can want with Mr. Calverley,' said she to her husband, after she had narrated to him the above conversation, 'is more than I can think; his name came up quite promiscuous, and she never stopped talking about him while I was there. She'd have gone on gossiping till now, but I had my work to do, and told her so, and came away.'

Mrs. Mogg's curiosity was not responded to by her husband; a man naturally reticent, and given in the interval between his supper and his bed to silent pipe-smoking. 'They're a rum lot, foreigners,' he said; and after that he spoke no more.

Meanwhile Pauline, left to herself, at once resumed the tiger-like pacing of her room. 'I must not lose sight,' she said, 'of any clue which is likely to serve me. Where he is, she will be; and until I have found them both, and made them feel what it is to attempt to play the fool with me, I shall not rest satisfied. I must find means to become acquainted with this Calverley; for sooner or later he must hear something of Tom Durham, whom he believes to have gone to Ceylon as his agent, and whose non-arrival there will of course be reported to him. So long as my husband and the poor puny thing for whom he has deserted me, can force money from the old man Claxton, they will do so. But in whatever relations she may stand to him, when he discovers her flight he will stop the supplies, and I should think Monsieur Durham will probably turn up with some cleverly-concocted story to account for his quitting the ship. They will learn that by telegraph from Gibraltar, I suppose; and he will again seek for legitimate employment. Meanwhile

I have the satisfaction of striking him with his own whip and stabbing him with his own dagger, by using the money which he gave me to help me in my endeavours to hunt him down. The money! It is there safe enough!'

As she placed her hand within the bosom of her dress, a curious expression, first of surprise, then of triumph, swept across her face. 'The letter!' she said, as she pulled it forth,—'the letter, almost as important as the bank-notes themselves, Tom Durham called it. It is sealed! Shall I open it; but for what good? To find, perhaps, á confession that he loves me no more, that he has taken this means to end our connection, and that he has given me the money to make amends for his betrayal of me—shall I— Bah! doubtless it is another part of the fraud, and contains nothing of any value.'

She broke the seal as she spoke, opened the envelope, and took out its contents, a single sheet of paper, on which was written:

'I have duly received the paper you sent me, and have placed it intact in another envelope, marked "Akhbar K," which I have deposited in the second drawer of my iron safe. Besides myself no one but my confidential head-clerk knows even as much as this, and I am glad that I declined to receive your confidence in the matter, as my very ignorance may at some future time be of service to you, or—don't think me harsh, but I have known you long enough to speak plainly to you—may prevent my being compromised. The packet will be given up to no one but yourself in person, or to some one who can describe the indorsement, as proof that they are accredited by you. H. S.'

This letter Pauline read and re-read over carefully; then with a shoulder-shrug returned it to its envelope, and replaced it in her bosom.

'Mysterious,' she said, 'and unsatisfactory, as is everything connected with Monsieur Durham! The paper to which this let-

ter refers is of importance doubtless, but what it may contain, and who "H. S." may be, are equally unknown to me; and without that information I am helpless to make use of it. Let it remain there! A time may come when it will be of service. Meanwhile I have the two thousand pounds to work with, and Monsieur Calverley to work upon; he is the only link which I can see at present to connect me with my fugitive husband. Through him is the only means I have of obtaining any information as to the whereabouts of this traitorous pair. The clue is slight enough, but it may serve in default of a better, and I must set my wits to work to make it useful.'

So the night went on; and the Mogg household, the proprietors themselves in the back-kitchen; the circulating librarian in the parlours; the Italian nobleman, who dealt in cameos and coral and bric-a-brac jewelry, in the drawing-room; the Belgian basso, who smoked such strong tobacco, and cleared his throat with such alarming vehemence, in the

second-floor back; and the German teacher, in ignorance of his intended forcible change of domicile, in the attic; all these slept the sleep of the just, and snored the snores of the weary; while Pauline, half undressed, lay on her bed, with eyes indeed half closed, but with her brain active and at work. In the middle of the night, warned by the rapid decrease of her candle that in a few minutes she would be in darkness, she rose from the bed, and taking from her carpet-bag a small neat blotting-book, she sat down at the table, and in a thin, clear, legible hand, to the practised eye eminently suggestive of hotel bills, wrote the following letter:

'19A *Poland-street, Soho.*

'Monsieur,—As a Frenchwoman domiciled in England, the name of Monsieur Calverley has become familiar to me as that of a gentleman—ah, the true English word!—who is renowned as one of the most constant and liberal benefactors to all kinds of charities for distressed foreigners. Do not start, monsieur;

do not turn aside or put away this letter in the idea that you have already arrived exactly at its meaning and intention. Naturally enough you think that the writer is about to throw herself on your mercy, and to implore you for money, or for admission into one of those asylums towards the support of which you do so much. It is not so, monsieur; though, were my circumstances different, it is to you I should apply, knowing that your ear is never deaf to such complaint. I have no want of money, though my soul is crushed; and I am well and strong in body, though my heart is wounded and bleeding, calamities for which, even in England, there are no hospitals nor doctors. Yet, monsieur, am I one of that clientèle which you have so nobly made your own—the foreigners in distress. Do you think that the only distressed foreigners are the people who want to give lessons, or get orders for wine and cigars, the poor governesses, the demoiselles de magasin, the émigrés of the Republic and the Empire? No, there is another kind of distressed foreigner,

—the woman with a small sum, on which she must live for the rest of her days, in penury if she manages ill, in decent thrift if she manages well. Who will guide her? I am such a woman, monsieur. To my own country, where I have lost all ties, and where remain to me but sad memories, I will not return. In this land, where, if I have no ties, yet have I no sad memories, I will remain. I have a small sum of money, on the interest of which I must exist; and to you I apply, monsieur; you, the merchant prince, the patron and benefactor of my countrymen, to advise in the investment of this poor sum, and keep me from the hands of charlatans and swindlers, who otherwise would rob me of it. I await your gracious answer,

'Monsieur; and am

'Your servant,

'PALMYRE DU TERTRE.'

The next morning Pauline conveyed this letter to the office in Mincing-lane, and asked to see Mr. Calverley; but on being told by a

smart clerk that Mr. Calverley was out of town, visiting the iron works in the North, and would not be back for some days, she left the letter in the clerk's hands, and begged for an answer at his chief's convenience.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE CITY.

THE descriptions of the great house of Calverley and Company given respectively by Mr. and Mrs. Calverley, though differing essentially in many particulars, had each a substratum of truth. The house had been founded half a century before by John Lorraine, the eldest son of a broken-down but ancient family in the north of England, who in very early years had been sent up to London to shift for himself, and arriving there with the conventional half-crown in his pocket, was, of course, destined to fame and fortune. Needless to say that, like so many other merchant princes, heroes of history far more veracious than this, his first experiences were those of struggling adversity. He kept the books, he ran the errands, he fetched and carried for his master—the old East-India agent in Great St. Helen's

— and by his intelligence and industry he commended himself to the good graces of his superiors; and was not only able to maintain himself in a respectable position, but to provide for his two younger brothers, who were sipping from the fount of learning at the grammar-school of Penrith. These junior scions being brought to town, and applying themselves, not, indeed, with the same energy as their elder brother, but with a passable amount of interest and care to the duties set before them, were taken into partnership by John Lorraine when he went into business for himself, and helped, in a certain degree, to establish the fortunes of the house. Of these fortunes John Lorraine was the mainspring and the principal producer. He had wonderful powers of foresight, and uncommon shrewdness in estimating the chances of any venture proposed to him; and with all these he was bold and lucky; "far too bold," his old employers said, with shaking heads, as they saw him gradually but surely outstripping them in the race; "far too lucky," his

detractors growled, when they saw speculations, which had been offered to them and promptly declined, prosper auriferously in John Lorraine's hands.

As soon as John Lorraine saw the tide of fortune strongly setting in, he took to himself a wife, the daughter of one of his City friends, a man of tolerable wealth and great experience, who in his early days had befriended the struggling boy, and who thought his daughter could not have achieved higher honour or greater happiness. Whatever honour or happiness may have accrued to the young lady on her marriage did not last long, for, shortly after giving birth to her first child, a daughter, she died; and thenceforward John Lorraine devoted his life to the little girl, and to the increased fortune which she was to inherit. When little Jane had arrived at a more than marriageable age, and from a pretty fubsy baby had grown into a thin, acidulated, opiniated woman (a result attributable to the manner in which she had been spoiled by her indulgent father), John Lorraine's mind was

mainly exercised as to what manner of man would propose for her with a likelihood of success. Hitherto, love-affairs had been things almost unknown to his Jane, not from any unwillingness on her part to make their acquaintance, but principally because, notwithstanding the fortune which it was known she would bring to her husband, none of the few young men who from time to time dined solemnly in the old-fashioned house in Brunswick-square, or acted as cavalier to its mistress to the Antient Concerts, or the King's Theatre, could make up their minds to address her in anything but the most common phrases. That Miss Jane had a will of her own, and a tart manner of expressing her intention of having that will fulfilled, was also matter of common gossip. Stories were current among the clerks at Mincing-lane of the 'wigging' which they had heard her administering to her father, when she drove down to fetch him away in her chariot, and when he kept her unduly waiting; the household servants in Brunswick-square had their opinion of Miss Jane's temper; and

the tradesmen in the neighbourhood looked forward to the entrance of her thin, dark figure into their shops every Tuesday morning, for the performance of settling the books, with fear and trembling.

Old John Lorraine, fully appreciating his daughter's infirmities, though, partly from affection, partly from fear, he never took upon himself to rebuke them, began to think that the fairy prince who was to wake this morally slumbering virgin to a sense of something better, to larger views and higher aims, to domestic happiness and married bliss, would never arrive. He came at last, however, in the person of George Gurwood; a big, broad-shouldered, jovial fellow, who, as a son of another of Lorraine's early friends, had some time previously been admitted as a partner into the house. Everybody liked good-looking, jolly George Gurwood. Lambton Lorraine and Lowther Lorraine, who, though now growing elderly men, had retained their bachelor tastes and habits, and managed to get through a great portion of the income accruing

to them from the business, were delighted with his jovial manners, his sporting tendencies, his convivial predilections. When the fact of George's paying his addresses to their niece was first promulgated, Lambton had a serious talk with his genial partner, warning him against tying himself for life to a woman with whom he had no single feeling in common. But George laughed at the caution, and declined to be guided by it. 'Miss Lorraine was not much in his line,' he said; 'perhaps a little given to tea and psalm-smiting; but it would come all right: he should get her into a different way; and as the dear old guv'nor' (by which title George always affectionately spoke of his senior partner) 'seemed to wish it, he was not going to stand in the way. He wanted a home, and Jane should make him a jolly one, he'd take care of that.'

Jane Lorraine married George Gurwood, but she did not make him a home. Her rigid bearing and unyielding temper were too strong for his plastic, pliable nature; for many months the struggle for mastery was carried on be-

tween them, but in the end George—jolly George no longer—gave way. He had made a tolerably good fight of it, and had used every means in his power to induce her to be less bitter, less furtive, less inexorable in the matter of his dinings-out, his sporting transactions, his constant desire to see his table surrounded by congenial company. 'I have tried to gentle her,' he said to Lowther Lorraine one day, 'as I would a horse, and there has never been one of them yet that I could not coax and pet into good temper; I'd spend any amount of money on her, and let her have her own way in most things if she would only just let me have mine in a few. I have tried her with a sharp bit and a pair of "persuaders," but that was no more use than the gentling. She's as hard as nails, Lowther, my boy, and I don't see my way out of it, that's the truth. So come along and have a B and S.'

If having a B and S—George's abbreviation for soda-water and brandy—would have helped him to see his way out of his difficulties, he would speedily have been able to perceive

it, for thenceforward his consumption of that and many other kinds of liquids was enormous. Wretched in his home, George Gurwood took to drinking to drown care, but, as in most similar cases, the demon proved himself far too buoyant to be overwhelmed even by the amount which George poured upon him. He was drinking morning, noon, and night, and was generally in a more or less muddled state. When he went to business, which was now very seldom, some of the clerks in the office laughed at him, which was bad enough, while others pitied him, which was worse. The story of George's dissipation was carefully kept from John Lorraine, who had virtually retired from the business, and devoted himself to nursing his rheumatism, and to superintending the education of his grandson, a fine boy of five or six years of age; but Lambton and Lowther held many colloquies together, the end of them all being that they agreed they could not tell what was to be done with George Gurwood. What was to be done with him was soon settled by George Gurwood himself.

Even his powerful constitution had been unable to withstand the ravages which constant drinking had inflicted upon it. He was seized with an attack of delirium tremens while attending a race-meeting at Warwick, and during the temporary absence of the night-nurse jolly George Gurwood terminated his earthly career by jumping from the bedroom window of the hotel into the yard below.

Then it was that the investigation of the affairs of the firm, consequent upon the death of one of the partners, revealed the serious state in which matters stood. All the name and fame, the large fortune, the enormous colonial business, the commercial credit which John Lorraine had spent his life in building up, had been gradually crumbling away. Two years more of this decadence, such as the perusal of the firm's books exhibited had taken place during the last ten years, and the great house of Lorraine Brothers would be in the Bankruptcy Court. Then it was that Mr. Calverley, hitherto known only as a plodding reliable head-clerk, thoroughly conversant with

all details of business, but never having shown any peculiar capabilities, came forward and made his mark. At the meeting of the creditors he expounded his views so lucidly, and showed so plainly how, by reorganising the business in every department, it could once more be put on a safe and proper footing, and reinstated in its old position as one of the leading houses in the City, that the helm was at once put into his hands. So safely and so prosperously did he steer the ship, that, before old John Lorraine died, he saw the business in Mincing-lane, though no longer conducted under its old name (Mr. Calverley had made a point of that, and had insisted on claiming whatever was due to his ability and exertions), more flourishing than in its best days; while Lambton and Lowther, who had been paid out at the reorganisation of affairs, and had thought themselves very lucky at escaping being sucked-in by the expected whirlpool, were disgusted at the triumphant results of the operations of a man by whom they had

set so little store, and complained indignantly of their ill-treatment.

And then John Calverley, who, as one of the necessities involved in carrying out his business transactions, had been frequently brought into communication with the widowed Mrs. Gurwood, first conceived the idea of making her an offer of marriage. Nearly forty years of his life had been spent in a state of bachelorhood, though he had not been without the comforts of a home. He was thoroughly domesticated by nature, simple in his tastes, shy and shrinking from society, and so engrossed by his unceasing labour during the day, that it was his happiness at night to put aside from his mind everything relating, however remotely, to his City toil, and to sit drinking his tea, and placidly chatting, reading, or listening to his old mother, from whom since his childhood he had never been separated. The first great grief of John Calverley's life, the death of this old lady, took place very shortly after he had assumed the reins of government in Mincing-lane, and

since then his home had been dull and cheerless. He sorely felt the want of a companion, but he knew nobody whom he could ask to share his lot. He had but rare opportunities of making the acquaintance of any ladies, but Mrs. Gurwood had been thrown in his way by chance, and, after some little hesitation, he ventured to propose to her. The proposition was not disagreeable to Jane Gurwood. For some time past she had felt the loss of some constantly present object on which to vent her bile; her tongue and her temper were both becoming rusty by disuse; and in the meek, pleasant little man, now rich and well-to-do, she thought she saw a very fitting recipient for both. So John Calverley and Jane Gurwood were married, with what result we have already seen.

The offices in Mincing-lane remained pretty much in the same state as they had been in old John Lorraine's day. They had been painted, of course, many times since he first entered upon their occupation, but in the heart of the City the brilliancy of paint

does not last very long, and in a very few months after the ladders and the scaffoldings had been removed, the outside woodwork relapsed into its state of grubbiness. There was a talk at one time of making some additions to the building, to provide accommodation for the increased staff of clerks which it had been found necessary to engage; but Mr. Calverley thought that the rooms originally occupied by Lambton and Lowther Lorraine would do very well for the newly-appointed young gentlemen, and there accordingly they set up their high desks and stools, their enormous ledgers and day-books. The elderly men, who had been John Lorraine's colleagues and subordinates in bygone days, still remained attached to the business; but their employer, not unmindful of the good services they had rendered, and conscious, perhaps, that without their aid he might have had some difficulty in carrying out his reorganisation so successfully, took means to lighten their duties and to place them rather in the position of overseers and superintendents, leaving the

grinding desk-work to be performed by their juniors. Of these young gentlemen there were several. They inhabited the lower floor of the warehouse, and the most presentable of them were told-off to see any stray customers that might enter. The ships' captains, the brokers, and the consignees, knew their way about the premises, and passed in and out unheeded; but occasionally strangers arrived with letters of introduction, or foreign merchants put in a fantastic appearance, and for the benefit of these there was a small glazed waiting-room set apart, with one or other of the presentable clerks to attend to them.

About a fortnight after Pauline's first visit, about the middle of the day, Mr. Walker, one of the clerks, entered the large office and proceeded to hang up his hat and to doff his coat, preparatory to putting on a sporting-looking garment made of shepherd's-plaid, with extremely short tails, and liberally garnished with ink-spots. Judging from his placid, satisfied appearance, and from the fact that he carried a toothpick between his lips, which

he was elegantly chewing, one might have guessed, without fear of contradiction, that Mr. Walker had just returned from dinner.

'You shouldn't hurry yourself in this way, Postman, you really shouldn't,' said Mr. Briscoe, one of the presentable clerks aforenamed. 'You will spoil your digestion if you do; and fancy what a calamity that would be to a man of your figure. You have only been out an hour and a quarter, and I understand they have sent round from Lake's to Newgate Market for some more joints.'

'Don't you be funny, William,' said Mr. Walker, wiping his lips, and slowly climbing on to his stool; 'it isn't in your line, and you might hurt yourself.'

'Hurt myself!' echoed Mr. Briscoe. 'I will hurt you, and spoil your appetite too, when I get the chance, keeping a fellow hanging on here, waiting for his luncheon, while you are gorging yourself to repletion for one and ninepence. Only you wait till next week, when it's my turn to go out at one, and you will see what a twist I'll give you. However,

one comfort is, I'm off at last.' And Mr. Briscoe jumped from his seat, and proceeded towards the hat-pegs.

'No, you're not,' said Mr. Walker, who had commenced a light dessert on a half-hundred of walnuts, which he had purchased at a stall on his way; 'there's a party just come into the private office, William, and as you're picked out for that berth on account of your beauty and superior manners, you will have to attend to her. A female party, do you hear, William; so, brush your hair, and pull down your wristbands, and make a swell of yourself.'

Mr. Briscoe looked with great disgust towards the partition through the dulled glass, on which he saw the outline of a female figure; then, stepping across, he opened a pane in the glass, and inquired what was wanted.

'I called here some time ago,' said Pauline, for it was she, 'and left a letter for Mr. Calverley. I was told he was out of town, but would return in a few days. Perhaps he is now here?'

'Mr. Calverley has returned,' said Mr. Briscoe, in his most fascinating manner, a compound of the familiarity with which he addressed the waitresses in the eating-houses and the nonchalance with which he regarded the duchesses in the Park. 'I believe he is engaged just now, but I will let him know you are here. What name shall I say?'

'Say Madame Du Tertre, if you please,' said Pauline; 'and mention that he has already had a letter from me.'

Mr. Briscoe bowed, and delivered his message through a speaking-tube which communicated with Mr. Calverley's room. In reply he was instructed to bring the lady upstairs; and bidding Pauline follow him, he at once introduced her into the presence of his chief.

As his visitor entered, Mr. Calverley rose from the desk at which he was seated, and graciously motioned her to a chair, looking hard at her from under his light eyebrows meanwhile.

Pauline was the first to speak. After she had seated herself, and Mr. Calverley had re-

sumed his place at his desk, she leaned forward and said, 'I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Calverley?'

'That is my name,' said John, with a bow and a pleasant smile. 'In what way can I have the pleasure of being of service to you?'

'You speak kindly, Mr. Calverley, and your appearance is just what I had expected. You received a letter from me — a strange letter you thought it; is it not so?'

'Well,' said John, 'it was not the sort of letter I have been in the habit of receiving; it was not strictly a business kind of letter, you know.'

'It was not addressed to you in your strictly business capacity, Mr. Calverley; it was written from the heart, a thing which does not often enter into business matters, I believe. It was written because I have heard of you as a man of benevolence and charity, interested in the fate of foreigners and exiles, able, if willing, to do what I wish.'

'My dear madam,' said John Calverley, 'I fear you much exaggerate any good qua-

lities I may possess. The very nature of my business throws me into constant communication with people from other countries, and if they are unfortunate I endeavour to help them to the best of my power. Such power is limited to the giving away of small sums of money, and helping them to return to their native country, to getting them employment if they desire to remain here, or recommending them to hospitals if they are ill; but yours is a peculiar case, if I recollect your letter rightly. I have it here, and can refer to it—'

'There is no occasion to do that. I can explain more fully and more promptly by word of mouth. Mine is, as you say, a peculiar case. I am the daughter of a retired officer of artillery, who lived at Lyons. At his death I married Monsieur Du Tertre, who was engaged as a traveller for one of the large silk factories there. He was frequently coming to England, and spoke the language well. He taught it to me, and I, to aid an income which was but small, taught it again

to several pupils in my native city. My husband, like most Frenchmen of his class, took a vivid interest in politics, and was mixed up in several of the more prominent Republican societies. One day, immediately after his return from a foreign journey, he was arrested, and since then, save on the day of his trial, I have not set eyes upon him. I know not where he is; he may be in the cachots of Mont Saint Michele; he may be kept au secret in the Conciergerie; he may be exiled to Cayenne—I know not. All I know is, I shall never see him again. "Avec ces gens-là il faut en finir," was all the reply I could get to my inquiries—they must be finished, done with, stamped out, what you will. There,' continued Pauline, brushing her eyes with her handkerchief, 'it is not often that I give way, monsieur; my life is too stern and too hard for that. After he was taken from me I could remain in Lyons no longer. It is not alone upon the heads of families that the Imperial Government revenges itself; so I came away to England, bringing with me all that

I had saved, all that I could scrape together, after selling everything we possessed, and the result is that I have, monsieur, a sum of two thousand pounds, which I wish to place in your hands, begging you to invest it in such a manner as will enable me to live honestly, and with something like decency, for the remainder of my days.'

John Calverley had listened to this recital with great attention, and when Pauline ceased speaking, he said to her with a half-grave smile:

'The remainder of your days, madam, is likely, I hope, to be a tolerably long period; for you are evidently quite a young woman. Now, with regard to your proposition, you yourself say it is unbusiness-like, and I must confess it strikes me as being so in the highest degree. You know nothing of me, beyond seeing my name as a subscriber to certain charities, or having heard it mentioned as that of a man who takes some interest in assisting foreigners in distress; and yet you offer to place in my hands what constitutes

your entire fortune, and intrust me with the disposal of it. I really do not think,' said John Calverley, hesitating, 'I can possibly undertake—'

'One moment, Mr. Calverley,' said Pauline. 'The responsibility of declining to take this money will be far greater than of accepting it; for if you decline to act for me, I will consult no one else; I will act on my own impulse, and shall probably either invest the sum in some swindling company, or squander and spend it.'

'You must not do that,' said John promptly; 'you must not think of doing that. Two thousand pounds is not a very large sum of money; but properly invested, a lady without encumbrance,' said John, with a dim recollection of the formula of servants' advertisements, 'might live very comfortably on the interest, more especially if she had no home to keep up.'

'But, monsieur, I must always have a home, a lodging, a something to live in,' said Pauline with a shrug.

'Yes, of course,' said John Calverley, rather absently; for at that moment a notable plan had suggested itself to him, and he was revolving it in his mind. 'Where are you living now, Madame Du Tertre?'

'I have a lodging—a bed-room—in Poland-street,' she replied.

'Dear me,' said John Calverley, in horrified amazement. 'Poland-street? I know, of course; back of the Pantheon—very stuffy and grimy, children playing battledore and shuttlecock in the street, organ-men and fish-barrows, and all that kind of thing; not at all pleasant.'

'No,' said Pauline, with a repetition of her shrug; 'but beggars have no choice, as the proverb says.'

'Did it ever occur to you,' said John nervously, 'that you might become a companion to a lady—quite comfortable, you know, and well treated, made one of the family, in point of fact?' he added, again recurring to the advertisement formula.

Pauline's eyes glistened at once, but her

voice was quite calm as she said: 'I have never thought of such a thing. I don't know whether I should like it. It would, of course, depend upon the family.'

'Of course,' assented John. 'I was thinking of— Do you play the piano, Madame Du Tertre?'

'O yes, sufficiently well.'

'Ah,' said John unconsciously, 'some of it does go a long way. Well, I was thinking that perhaps—'

'Mrs. Calverley, sir,' said Mr. Briscoe, throwing open the door.

Mrs. Calverley walked into the room, looking so stern and defiant that her husband saw he must take immediate action to prevent the outbreak of a storm. Since that evening in Great Walpole-street, when John Calverley had plucked up his spirit, and ventured to assert himself, his wife, though cold and grim as ever, had kept more outward control over her temper, and had almost ceased to give vent to the virulent raillery in which she formerly indulged. Like most despots she had

been paralysed when her meek slave rebelled against her tyranny, and had stood in perpetual fear of him ever since.

'You come at a very opportune moment, Jane,' said John Calverley.

'It scarcely seems so,' said his wife, from between her closed lips. 'I was afraid I might be regarded as an unpleasant interruption to a private interview.'

'It is I, madam,' said Pauline, rising, 'who am the interrupter here. My business with Mr. Calverley is ended, and I will now retire.'

'Pray stay, Madame Du Tertre,' said John, motioning her again to her chair.—'This lady, Jane, is Madame Du Tertre, a foreigner and a stranger in England.'

'But not a stranger to the history of Madame Calverley,' said Pauline, rising gracefully; 'not a stranger to the beneficence, the charities, the piety of Mademoiselle Lorraine; not a stranger,' she added, in a lower tone, 'to the sainted sufferings of Madame Gurwood. Ah, madame, though I have been but a very short time in this great city of London,

I have heard of you, of your religion, and your goodness, and I am honoured in the opportunity of being able to kiss your hand.' And suiting the action to the word, Pauline took Jane Calverley's plum-coloured gauntlet into her own neatly-gloved palm and pressed it to her lips.

Mrs. Calverley was so taken aback at this performance, that, beyond muttering 'not worthy' and 'too generous,' she said nothing. But her husband marked the faint blush of satisfaction which spread over her clay-coloured complexion, and took advantage of the impression made to say:

'Madame Du Tertre, my dear Jane, is a French lady, a widow with a small fortune, which she wishes me to invest for her in the best way possible. In the mean time she is a stranger here in London, as I said before, and she has no comfortable lodging and no friends. I thought perhaps that, as I am compelled by business to be frequently absent from home, and am likely to continue to be so, it might break the loneliness of your life if Madame

Du Tertre, who speaks our language well, and plays the piano, and is no doubt generally accomplished, might come as your visitor for a short time, and then if you found you suited each other, one might make some more permanent arrangement.'

When Jane Calverley first entered the room and saw a lady gossipping with her husband, she thought she had discovered the means of bringing him to shame, and making his life a burden to him. Now in his visitor she saw, as she thought, a woman possessing qualities such as she admired, but for which she never gave her husband credit, and one who might render her efficient aid in her life's campaign against him. Even if what had been told her were false, and that this woman were an old friend of his, as a visitor in Great Walpole-street Mrs. Calverley would have her under her own eye, and she believed sufficiently in her own powers of penetration to enable her to judge of the relations between them. So that, after a little more talk, the visit was determined on, and it was ar-

ranged that the next day Madame Du Tertre should remove to her new quarters.

'And now,' said Pauline, as she knocked at Mr. Mogg's door, whither the Calverley's carriage had brought her, 'and now, Monsieur Tom Durham, *gare à vous!* for this day I have laid the beginning of the train which, sooner or later, shall blow your newly-built castle of happiness into the air!'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VICAR OF LULLINGTON.

Jolly George Gurwood's only child, the little boy whom his grandfather, old John Lorraine, made so much of during the latter years of his life, after having been educated at Marlborough and Oxford, was admitted into holy orders, and, at the time of our story, was Vicar of Lullington, a rural parish, about one hundred and twenty miles from London, on the great Northern road. A pleasant place Lullington for a lazy man. A quiet, sleepy little village of half a hundred houses, scattered here and there, with a chirpy little brook singing its way through what was supposed to be the principal street, and hurrying onwards through great broad tracts of green pasturage, where in the summer time the red-brown cattle drank of it, and cooled their heated limbs in its re-

freshing tide, until it was finally swallowed up in the silver Trent.

Lullington Church was not a particularly picturesque edifice, for it resembled a large barn, with a square, weather-beaten tower at one end of it; nor was the churchyard at all likely to be provocative of an elegy, or of anything but rheumatism, being a damp, dreary little spot, with most of its tombstones covered with green moss, and with a public footpath, with a stile at either end, running through the middle of it. But to the artists wandering through that part of the country (they were not numerous, for Notts and Lincoln have not much to offer to the sketcher), the vicarage made up for the shortcomings of the church. It was a square, old-fashioned, red-bricked house, standing in the midst of a garden full of greenery; and whereas the church looked time-worn and cold, and had, even on the brightest summer day, a teeth-chattering, gruesome appearance, the vicarage had a jolly cheerful expression, and when the sun gleamed on its little diamond-shaped win-

dows, with their leaden casements, you were inexplicably reminded of a red-faced, genial old gentleman, whose eyes were twinkling in delight at some funny story which he had just heard.

It was just the home for a middle-aged man with a wife and family; for it had a large number of rooms of all kinds and shapes, square bed-chambers, triangular nooks, long passages, large attics, wherein was accommodation for half-a-dozen servants, and ramshackle stables, where as many horses could be stowed away. It was just the house for a man of large means, who would not object to devoting a certain portion of his leisure to his parochial duties, but whose principal occupation would be in his garden or his greenhouses. Such a man was Martin Gurwood's predecessor, who had held the living for fifty years, and had seen some half-score boys and girls issue from the vicarage into the world to marry and settle themselves in various ways of life. The Reverend Anthony Camden was known as a rose-grower throughout three

adjoining counties, and had even obtained special prizes at Crystal-Palace and Botanical-Garden shows. He was a bit of a fisherman too, and had been in his younger days something of a shot. Not being much of a reader, except of the *Field* and the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, he would have found the winter evenings dull, had it not been for the excitement of perpetually re-arranging his large collection of moths and butterflies, renewing their corks and pins, and putting fresh pieces of camphor into the corners of the glazed drawers which contained them. Mr. Camden knew all about crops and manure, and sub-soiling and drainage; the farmers for miles round used to come to the vicarage to consult him, and he always gave them beer and advice, both of the best quality. He played long-whist and preached short sermons; and when he died in a green old age, it was universally voted in Lullington and its neighbourhood, that it would be impossible to replace him.

Certainly, there could not have been a more marked contrast than between him and

his successor. Martin Gurwood was a man of six-and-twenty, unmarried, with apparently no thought in life beyond his sacred calling and the duties appertaining to it. Only half the rooms in the vicarage were furnished; and, except on such rare occasions as his mother or some of his friends coming to stay with him, only two of them on the ground-floor, one the vicar's study, the other his bed-chamber, were used. The persistent entreaties of his old housekeeper had induced him to relent from his original intention of allowing the garden to go to rack and ruin, and it was accordingly handed over to the sexton, who in so small a community had but little work in his own particular line, and who kept up the old-fashioned flowers and the smooth-shaven lawns in which their late owner had so much delighted. But Martin Gurwood took no interest in the garden himself, and only entered it occasionally of an evening, when he would stroll up and down the lawn, or one of the gravel walks, with his head bent forward and his hands clasped behind him, deep in medi-

tation. He kept a horse, certainly—a powerful big-boned Irish hunter—but he only rode her by fits and starts, sometimes leaving her in the stable for weeks together, dependent on such exercise as she could obtain in the spare moments of her groom, at other times persistently riding her day after day, no matter what might be the weather. On those occasions the vicar did not merely go out for a mild constitutional, to potter round the outskirts of his parish, or to trot over to the market-town; he was out for hours at a stretch, and generally brought the mare home heated and foam-flecked. Indeed, more than one of his parishioners had seen their spiritual guide riding across country, solitary indeed, but straight, as though he were marking out the line for a steeple-chase, stopping neither for hedge, bank, nor brook, the Irish mare flying all in her stride, her rider sitting with his hands down on her withers, his lips compressed, and his face deadly pale. 'Tekkin it out of hisself, mebbe,' said Farmer Barford, when his son described to him this sight which

he had seen that afternoon; 'for all he's so close, and so meek and religious, there's a spice of the devil in him as in every other man; and, Bill, my boy, that's the way he takes it out of hisself.' Thus Farmer Barford, and to this effect spoke several of the parishioners in committee assembled over their pipes and beer at the Dun Cow.

They did not hint anything of the kind to the vicar himself, trust them for that! Martin Gurwood could not be called popular amongst the community in which his lot was cast; he was charitable to a degrèe, lavish with his money, thinking nothing of passing days and nights by the bedside of the sick, contributing more than half the funds necessary for the maintenance of the village schools, accessible at all times, and ready with such advice or assistance as the occasion demanded; but yet they called him 'high and standoffish.' Old Mr. Camden, making a house-to-house visitation perhaps once a year, when the fit so seized him, 'going his rounds,' as he called it, would sit down to dinner in a farm-house

kitchen, or take a mug of beer with the farmer while they talked about crops, and occasionally would preside at a harvest-home supper, or a Christmas gathering. Martin Gurwood did nothing of this kind; he was always polite, invariably courteous, but he never courted anything like fellowship or bonhomie. He had joined the village cricket-club on his first arrival, and showed himself an excellent and energetic player; but the familiarity engendered in the field seemed displeasing to him, and though he continued his subscription, he gradually withdrew from active membership. Nor was his religious ardour particularly pleasing to the parishioners, who, under Mr. Camden's lax rule, had thought it sufficient if they put-in an appearance at morning service, and thus cleared off the debt of attendance until the succeeding Sunday. They could not understand what the parson meant by having prayers at eight o'clock every morning: who did he expect would go at such a time, they wondered? Not they, nor their men, who were far away in

the fields before that time; not the missuses, who had the dairy and the house to attend to; not the girls, who were looking after the linen and minding the younger children; nor the boys, who, if not at school, were out at farm-work. It was all very well for the two Miss Dyneleys, the two maiden ladies living at Ivy Cottage, who had money coming in regular, paid them by the Government (the Lullington idea of consols was not particularly clear), and had naught to do from morning till night; it filled-up their time like, and was a kind of amusement to them. All very well for old Mr. Willis, who had made his fortune, it was said, by being a tailor in London, who had bought the Larches where Squire Needham used to live in the good old times, who could not ride, or drive, or shoot, or fish, or do anything but walk about his garden with a spud over his shoulders, and who was said to be dying to get back to business. These and some two or three of the bigger girls from the Miss Gilks's seminary for young ladies, were all that attended at

'Mattins,' as the name of the morning service stood in Early-english type on the index-board in the churchyard; but Martin Gurwood persevered and went through the service with as much earnestness and devotion as though the church had been full and the bishop of the diocese seated in the vicar's pew.

There was the usual element of squirearchy in the neighbourhood, and on Martin's first introduction into its parish the squires' wives drove over, leaving their own and their husbands' cards, and invitations to dinner, duly arranged for a time when the moon was at its full. Mr. Gurwood responded to these invitations, and made his appearance at the various banquets. Accustomed to old Mr. Camden with his red face, his bald head, his white whiskers, and black suit cut in the fashion of a quarter of a century ago, the county people were at first rather impressed with Martin Gurwood's thin handsome face, and small well-dressed figure. It was a relief, the women said, to see a gentleman amongst them, and they were all certain that Mr. Gur-

wood would be an acquisition to the local society; but as the guests were driving homeward from the first of these feasts, several of the male convives imparted to their wives their idea that the new Vicar of Lullington was not merely unfit to hold a candle to his predecessor, but was likely to prove a meddlesome, disagreeable fellow. It seemed that after the ladies had retired, the conversation becoming as usual rather free, Mr. Gurwood had sat in blank, stony silence, keeping his eyes steadily fixed upon the contents of his dessert plate, and neither by look nor word giving the slightest intimation that he was aware of what was going on. But when rallied from his silence by Mr. Lidstone, a man of low tastes and small education, but enormously wealthy, Mr. Gurwood had spoken out and declared that if by indulging in such conversation, and telling such stories, they chose to ignore the respect due to themselves, they ought at least, while he was among them, to recollect the respect due to him, and to the calling which he represented. He had no

desire to assume the character of a wet blanket or a kill-joy, but they must understand that for the future they must chose between his presence and the indulgence in such conversation; and as they had evidently not expected any such demonstration in the present instance, he would relieve them of his company at once, and leave them to decide whether or not he should again come amongst them as a guest. So saying, the parson had walked out of the window on to the lawn as cool as a cucumber, and left the squirearchy gaping in astonishment.

They were Bœotian, these county people, crass, ignorant, and rusted with prejudice from want of contact with the world, but they were by no means bad-hearted, and they took the parson's remonstrance in very good part. Each one who had already sent Martin Gurwood an invitation, managed to grip his hand before the evening was over, and took occasion to renew it, declaring he should have no occasion to reiterate the remarks which he had just made, and which they perfectly under-

stood. Nor had he; he went a round of these solemn festivities, finding each one, both during the presence of the ladies and after their withdrawal, perfectly decorous, but unspeakably dull. He had not been sufficiently long in the neighbourhood for the local gossip to possess the smallest interest to him; he was not sufficient of an agriculturist to discuss the different methods of farming or the various qualities of food; he could talk about Oxford indeed, where some of his hosts or their friends had young relations whom he had known; he could and did sing well certain Italian songs in a rich tenor voice; and he discussed church architecture and decorations with the young ladies. But the old squires and the young squires cared for none of these things. They remembered how old Anthony Camden would sit by while the broadest stories were told, looking, save from the twinkle in his eye and the curling of his bulbous nether lip, as though he heard them not; with what feeling he would troll out a ballad of Dibdin's, or a bacchanalian ditty; and how the brewing of the bowl of

punch, the 'stirrup-cup,' was always intrusted to his practised hand. Martin Gurwood took a glass of cold water before leaving; and if he were dining out any distance always had the one hired fly of the neighbourhood to convey him back to the vicarage. No wonder that the laughter-loving, roisterous squires shook their heads when they thought of old Anthony Camden, and mourned over the glories of those departed days.

Martin Gurwood was not, however, at Lullington just now. He had induced an old college friend to look after the welfare of his parishioners while he ran up, as he did once or twice in the year, to stay for a fortnight with his mother in Great Walpole-street. John Calverley, who had a strong liking for Martin, a feeling which the vicar cordially reciprocated, was anxious that his step-son should come to them at Christmas; being an old-fashioned soul with a belief in holly and yule logs, and kindly greetings and open-hearted charities, at what he invariably spoke of as that 'festive season,' and having an intense

desire to interpose at such a time a friendly ægis between him and the stony-faced Gorgon, whom it was his lot through life to confront. But Martin Gurwood, regarding the Christmas season in a very different light, urged that at such a time it would be impossible for him to absent himself from his duties, and after his own frigid manner refused to be tempted by the convivial blandishments which John held out to him, or to be scared by the picture of the grim loneliness of the vicarage which his stepfather drew for his edification. So, in the early days of November, when the Lullington farmers were getting well into their hunting, and the London fogs, scarcely long enough to embrace the entire length of Great Walpole-street, blotted out its middle and its lower end, leaving the upper part comparatively bright and airy, Martin Gurwood came to town and took up his abode in Mrs. Calverley's best spare bedroom.

The other spare bedroom in the house was occupied by Madame Pauline Du Tertre, who had for some time been installed there, and

had regularly taken up her position as the friend of the family and confidential adviser to the female head of the house. Immediately on gaining her footing within the walls, Pauline had succeeded in establishing herself in the good graces of the self-contained, silent woman, who hitherto had never known what it was to have any one to share her confidences, to listen patiently to her never-ceasing complaints, and to be able and willing to make little suggestions which chimed-in with Mrs. Calverley's thoughts and wishes. Years ago, before her first marriage, Jane Calverley had had a surfeit of toadyism and flattery from her poor relations and dependants, and from the servants, who cringed to and fawned upon the young girl as though they had been southern slaves and she their owner. But in George Gurwood's days, and since her marriage with her second husband, Mrs. Calverley had made no friends, and even those whose interest it was to stand well with her had found it impossible to break through the barriers of icy reserve with which she surrounded

herself. They did not approach her in the proper manner perhaps, they did not go to work in the right way. Commonly bred and ill-educated people as they were, they imagined that the direct road to Jane Calverley's favour lay in pitying her and speaking against her husband, with whom she was plainly at strife. As is usual with such people, they overacted their parts; they spoke strongly and bitterly in their denunciation of Mr. Calverley; they were coarse, and their loud-trumpeted compassion for their mistress jarred upon its recipient. Jane Calverley was a proud as well as a hard woman, and her mind revolted against the idea of being openly compassionated by her inferiors; so she kept her confidences rigidly locked in her own breast, and Pauline's was the first hand to press a spring by which the casket was opened.

Before the Frenchwoman had been in the house twenty-four hours, she had learned exactly the relations of its inmates, and as much as has been already set forth in these pages of their family history. She had probed the

characters of the husband and the wife, had listened to the mother's eulogies of her saintly son, and had sighed and shaken her head in seeming condolence over the vividly-described shortcomings of Mr. Calverley. Without effusion, and with only the dumb sympathy conveyed by her eloquent eyes and gestures, Pauline managed to lead her new-found friend, now that she comprehended her domestic troubles, and would do her best to aid her in getting rid of them, and in many other ways she made herself useful and agreeable to the cold, friendless woman who was her hostess. She re-arranged the furniture of the dreary drawing-room, lighting it up here and there with such flowers as were procurable, and with evergreens, which she bought herself; she covered the square formal chairs and couches with muslin antimacassars, and gave the room, what it had never hitherto had, the semblance of a woman's presence. She accomplished what everybody had imagined to be an impossibility, an alteration in the style of Mrs. Calverley's costume; she made with her own

hands a little elegant cap with soft blond falling from it, which took away from that rigid outline of the chin; and instead of the wisp of black net round her throat, she induced Mrs. Calverley to wear a neat white muslin handkerchief across her chest. The piano, seldom touched, save when Mrs. Calverley, in an extraordinary good temper, would, for her husband's edification, thump and strum away at an overture in *Semiramide* and other set pieces, which she had learned in her youth, was now regularly brought into use, and in the evening Pauline would seat herself at it, playing long selections from Mendelssohn and Beethoven, or singing religious songs by Mozart, the listening to which made John Calverley supremely happy, and even brought something like moisture into his wife's steely eyes. It is probable that had Mrs. Calverley had any notion that these songs were the composition of a Roman Catholic, and were many of them used in what she was accustomed to speak of as 'Popish ceremonies,' she would never have been induced even to listen to them; but with un-

erring judgment Pauline had at once divined this phase in her employer's character, and, while the particular sect to which she belonged was of no importance to herself, had taken care to make Mrs. Calverley understand that Luther had no more devoted adherent.

'She is a Huguenot, my dear,' said Mrs. Calverley to Martin Gurwood, shortly after his arrival, and before she had presented him to the new inmate of the house; 'a Huguenot of ancient family, who lost all their property a long time ago by the revocation of the edict of somebody—Nancy, I think, was the name. You will find her a most amiable person, richly endowed with good gifts, and calculated, should she not suffer from the evil effects of Mr. Calverley's companionship, to prove an inestimable blessing to me.'

Martin Gurwood expressed himself well pleased to hear this account of his mother's new-found friend; but, on being presented to Pauline, he scarcely found the description realised. His natural cleverness had been sharpened by his public-school and university

education; and, though during the last few years of his life he had been buried in comparative obscurity, he retained sufficient knowledge of the world to perceive that a woman like Madame Du Tertre, bright, clever, to a certain degree accomplished, and possessing immense energy and power of will, would not have relegated herself to such a life as she was then leading without having a strong aim to gain. And what that aim was he was determined to find out.

But, though these were Martin Gurwood's thoughts, he never permitted a trace of them to appear in his manner to Madame Du Tertre, which was scrupulously courteous, if nothing more. Perhaps it was from his mother that he inherited a certain cold propriety of bearing and frigidity of demeanour, which his acquaintances generally complained of. The farmers of Lullington, comparing it with the geniality of their previous pastor, found it insufferable; and his college friends, who had come in contact with him of late years, thought he was a totally changed being from

the high-spirited fellow who had been one of the noisiest athletes of his day. Certain it was that he was now pensive and reserved; nay more, that when out of Lullington in company—that is to say, either with any of his former colleagues, or of a few persons who were visitors at the house in Great Walpole-street—he seemed desirous almost of shunning observation, and of studiously keeping in the back-ground, when his mother's pride in him would have made him take a leading part in any conversation that might be going on. Before he had been two days in the house Pauline's quick instinct had detected this peculiarity, and she had mentally noted it among the things which, properly worked, might help her to the elucidation of the plan to which she had devoted her life. She determined on making herself agreeable to this young man, on forcing him into a certain amount of intimacy and companionship; and so skilful were her tactics, that, without absolute rudeness, Martin Gurwood found it

impossible entirely to withdraw from her advances.

One night she challenged him to chess, and during the intervals of the game she endeavoured to learn more of him than she had hitherto been able to do in mere desultory conversation in the presence of others.

Mrs. Calverley was hard at work at the Berlin-wool frame, putting the final touches to Jael and Sisera; John Calverley, with the newspaper in his lap, was fast asleep in his easy-chair; and the chess-players were at the far end of the room, with a shaded lamp between them.

They formed a strange contrast this couple: he, with his wavy chestnut hair, his thin red-and-white, clear-cut, whiskerless face, his shifting blue eyes, and his weak irresolute mouth; she, with her olive complexion, her blue-black hair, her steady earnest gaze, her square firm jaw, and the deep orange trimmings of her black silk dress, showing strangely against her companion's [illegible] clerical dress.

'You are too strong for me, monsieur,' said Pauline, at the conclusion of the first game; 'but I will not yield you the victory without a farther struggle.'

'I was going to say you played an excellent game, Madame Du Terrail, but after your remark, it would sound as though I were complimenting myself,' said Martin; 'I have but few opportunities for chess-playing now, but it was a favourite game of mine at college; and I knew many a man who prided himself on his play whose head for it was certainly not so good as yours.'

'You have not many persons in your—what you call your parish—who play chess?'

'No, indeed,' said Martin, 'amongst those I believe to be the highest flight in the line amongst the farmers.'

'Ah, monsieur,' said Pauline, with an inclination of her head and downcast eyes, 'I am the last person in the world to rebel against duty, or to allow that it should not be undertaken in that spirit of Christianity which you have shown. But are you sure, Monsieur Martin, that you are acting rightly? However good your intentions may be, with your devotion to the cause you have espoused, and with your great talents, you should be taking a leading position in the great battle of religion; whereas, by burying yourself in this hole, there you lose for yourself the opportunity of fame, while the Church loses a brilliant leader.'

'I have no desire for fame, Madame Du Tertre; and if I can only do my duty diligently, it is enough for me.'

'Yes; but there is another thing. Pardon me, Monsieur Martin, I am a strange woman and some years older than you, so that you must not think me guilty of an impertinence in speaking freely to you. Your Church—our Church—does not condemn its ministers to

an ascetic or a celibate life—that is one of the wildest errors of Romanism. Has it never struck you that in consenting to remain amongst persons with whom you have nothing in common—where you are never likely to meet a woman calculated so to excite your admiration and affection as to induce you to make her your wife, you are rather following the Roman than the Protestant custom?'

A faint flush, duly marked by Pauline's keen eyes, passed over Martin Gurwood's handsome features. 'I have no intention of marrying,' he said, in a low voice.

'Not now perhaps,' said Pauline, 'because you have not yet seen anyone whom you could love. A man of your taste and education is always fastidious; but, depend upon it, you will some day find some lovely girl of ancient family who—'

'It will be time enough then to speak of it, Madame Du Tertre, would it not?' said Martin Gurwood, flushing again. 'Now, if you please, we will resume our game.'

When Pauline went to her bedroom that night she locked the door, threw herself into an easy-chair in front of the fire, and remained buried in contemplation. Then she rose, and as she strolled towards the dressing-table, said half aloud: 'That man is jealously guarding a secret—and it is his own!'

CHAPTER IX.

TOM DURHAM'S FRIEND.

On the morning after the Reverend Martin Gurwood and Madame Du Tertre had had their game at chess, and held the conversation just recorded, a straggling sunbeam, which had lost its way, turned by accident into 'Change-alley, and fell straight on to the bald head of a gentleman in the second-floor of one of the houses there. This gentleman, who, according to the inscription on the outer door jamb, was Mr. Humphrey Statham, was so astonished at the unexpected solar apparition, that he laid down the bundle of red tape with which he was knotting some papers together, and advancing to the grimy window, rubbed a square inch of dirt off the pane, and bending down, looked up at as much as he could discern of the narrow strip of dun-

coloured sky which does duty for the blue empyrean to the inhabitants of 'Change-alley. The sun but rarely visits 'Change-alley in summer, and in winter scarcely ever puts in an appearance; the denizens endeavour to compensate themselves for its absence by hanging huge burnished tin reflectors outside their windows, or giving up all attempts at deception, and sitting under gaslight from morning till eve. So that what Mr. Statham saw when he looked up was as satisfactory as it was unexpected, and he rubbed his hands together in sheer geniality, as he muttered something about having 'decent weather for his trip.'

A tall, strongly-built man, and good-looking after his fashion, with a fringe of dark-brown hair round his bald crown, large regular features, piercing hazel eyes, somewhat overhanging brows, a pleasant mobile mouth, and a crisp brown beard.

Humphrey Statham was a ship-broker, though, from a cursory glance at his office, it would have been difficult to guess what occu-

pation he pursued, furnished as it was in the ordinary business fashion. There was a large leather-covered writing-table, at which he was seated, a standing desk in the window, an old worn stained leather easy-chair for clients, the customary directories and commercial lists on shelves against the wall, the usual Stationers' Almanac hanging above the mantelpiece, the usual worn carpet and cinder-browned hearth-rug. In the outer office, where the four clerks sat, and where the smaller owners and the captains had to wait Mr. Statham's leisure (large owners and underwriters being granted immediate audience), the walls were covered with printed bills, announcing the dates of departure of certain ships, the approaching sale of others; the high desks were laden with huge ledgers and files of Lloyd's lists; and one of the clerks, who took a deep interest in his business, gave quite a maritime flavour to the place by invariably wearing a particular short pea-jacket and a hard round oilskin hat.

Not much leisure had these clerks; they

were, to use their own phrase, 'at it' from morning till night, for Mr. Statham's business was a large one, and though all the more important part of it was discharged by himself, there was plenty of letter-writing and agreement copying, ledger-entering, and running backwards and forwards between the office and Lloyd's when the 'governor,' as they called him, was busy with the underwriters. This year had been a peculiarly busy one; so busy, that Mr. Statham had been unable to take his usual autumnal holiday, a period of relaxation which he always looked forward to, and which, being fond of athletics, and still in the very prime of life, he usually passed among the Swiss Alps. This autumn he had passed it at Teddington instead of Courmayeur, and had substituted a couple of hours' pull on the river in the evening for his mountain climbing and hairbreadth escapes. But the change had not been sufficient; his head was dazed, he suffered under a great sense of lassitude; and his doctor had ordered him to knock-off work, and to start immedi-

ately for a clear month's vacation. Where he was to go he had scarcely made up his mind. Of course, Switzerland in November was impossible, and he was debating between the attractions of a month's snipe-shooting in Ireland and the delight of passing his time on board one of the Scilly Islands pilot-boats, roughing it with the men, and thoroughly enjoying the wild life and the dangerous occupation. A grave, plain-mannered man in his business — somewhat over cautious and reserved they thought him at Lloyd's— Humphrey Statham, when away for his holiday, had the high spirits of a boy, and never was so happy as when he had thrown off all the ordinary constraints of conventionality, and was leading a life widely different from that normally led by him, and associating with persons widely different from those with whom he was ordinarily brought into contact. Mr. Statham was, however, in his business just now, and had not thrown off his cautious habits. By his side stood a large iron safe, with one or two of its drawers open, and be-

fore him lay a number of letters and papers, which he read through one by one, or curiously glanced at, duly docketed them, made some memorandum regarding them in his note-book, and stowed them away in a drawer in the safe. As he read through some of them, he smiled; at others he glanced with an angry frown or a shoulder-shrug of contempt; but there were one or two during the perusal of which the lines in his face seemed to deepen perceptibly, and before he laid them aside he pondered long and deeply over their contents.

'What a queer lot it is!' said Humphrey Statham wearily, throwing himself back in his chair; 'and how astonished people would be if they only knew what a strange mass of human interests these papers represent! With the exception of Collins, outside there, no one, I suppose, comes into this room who does not imagine that this safe contains nothing but business memoranda, insurances, brokerages, calculations, and commissions; details concerning the Lively Polly of Yarmouth, or the Saucy Sally of Whitstable; or who has the

faintest idea that among the business documents there are papers and letters which would form good stock-in-trade for a romance writer! Why on earth do those fellows spin their brains, when for a very small investment of cash they could get people to tell them their own experiences, actual facts and occurrences, infinitely more striking and interesting than the nonsense which they invent? Every man who has seen anything of life must at one time or other have had some strange experience: the man who sells dog-collars and penknives at the corner of the court; the old broken-down hack in the outer office, who was a gentleman once, and now copies letters and runs errands for fifteen shillings a week; and I, the solemn, grave, trusted man of business—I, the cautious and reserved Humphrey Statham—perhaps I too have had my experiences which would work into a strange story! A story I may have to tell some day—may have to tell to a man, standing face to face with him, looking straight into his eyes, and showing him how he has been delivered into my hands.'

And Humphrey Statham crossed his arms before him and let his chin sink upon his breast, as he indulged in a profound reverie.

We will anticipate the story which Mr. Statham imagined that he would some day have to tell under such peculiar circumstances.

Humphrey Statham's father was a merchant and a man of means, living in good style in Russell-square; and, though of a somewhat gloomy temperament and stern demeanour, in his way fond of his son, and determined that the lad should be educated and prepared for the position which he would afterwards have to assume. Humphrey's mother was dead—had died soon after his birth—he had no brothers or sisters; and as Mr. Statham had never married again, the household was conducted by his sister, a meek long-suffering maiden lady, to whom hebdomadal attendance at the Foundling Chapel was the one joy in life. It had first been intended that the child should be educated at home; but he seemed so out of place in the big old-fashioned house, so strange in the company of his grave

father or melancholy aunt, that, to prevent his being given over entirely to the servants, whom he liked very much, and with whom he spent most of his time, he was sent at an early age to a preparatory establishment, and then transferred to a grammar-school of repute in the neighbourhood of London. He was a dare-devil boy, full of fun and mischief, capital at cricket and football, and though remarkably quick by nature, and undoubtedly possessing plenty of appreciative common-sense and savoir faire, yet taking no position in the school, and held in very cheap estimation by his master. The half-yearly reports which, together with the bills for education and extras, were placed inside Master Humphrey's box, on the top of his neatly-packed clothes, and accompanied him home at every vacation from Canehambury, did not tend to make Mr. Statham any the less stern, or his manner to his son any more indulgent. The boy knew—he could not help knowing—that his father was wealthy and influential, and he had looked forward to his future without any fear, and,

indeed, without very much concern. He thought he should like to go into the army, which meant to wear a handsome uniform and do little or nothing, to be petted by the ladies, of whose charms he had already shown himself perfectly cognisant, and to lead a life of luxury and ease. But Mr. Statham had widely different views. Although he had succeeded to his business, he had vastly improved it since he became its master, and had no idea of surrendering so lucrative a concern to a stranger, or of letting it pass out of the family. As he had worked, so should his son work in his turn; and accordingly, Master Humphrey on his removal from Canehambury was sent to a tutor resident in one of the Rhineland towns, with a view to his instruction in French and German, and to his development from a careless, high-spirited lad into a man of business and of the world.

The German tutor, a dreamy misty transcendentalist, was eminently unfitted for the charge intrusted to him. He gave the boy certain books, and left him to read them or

not, as he chose; he set him certain tasks, but never took the trouble to see how they had been performed, or, indeed, whether they had been touched at all, till he was remarkably astonished after a short time to find his pupil speaking very excellent German, and once or twice took the trouble to wonder how 'Homfrie,' as he called him, could have acquired such a mastery of the language. Had an explanation of the marvel ever been asked of Humphrey himself, he could have explained it very readily. The town selected for his domicile was one of the celebrated art-academies of Germany, a place where painters of all kinds flocked from all parts to study under the renowned professors therein resident. A jovial, thriftless, kindly set of Bohemians these painters, in the strict sense of the word, impecunious to a degree, now working from morn till eve for days together, now not touching pencil or maulstick for weeks, living in a perpetual fog of tobacco, and spending their nights in beer-drinking and song-singing, in cheap epicureanism and noisy philosophical

discussions. To this society of careless convives Humphrey Statham obtained a ready introduction, and among them soon established himself as a prime favourite. The bright face and interminable spirits of 'Gesellschap's Engländer,' as he was called (Gesellschap was the name of his tutor), made him welcome everywhere. He passed his days in lounging from studio to studio, smoking pipes and exchanging jokes with their denizens, occasionally standing for a model for his hosts, now with bare neck and arms appearing as a Roman gladiator, now with casque and morion as a young Flemish burgher of Van Artevelde's guard, always ready, always obliging, roaring at his own linguistic mistakes, but never failing to correct them; while at night at the painters' club, the Malkasten, or the less aristocratic Kneipe, his voice was the cheeriest in the chorus, his wit the readiest in suggesting tableaux vivants, or in improvising practical jokes.

A pleasant life truly, but not, perhaps, a particularly reputable one. Certainly not one

calculated for the formation of a City man of business according to Mr. Statham's interpretation of the term. When at the age of twenty the young man tore himself away from his Bohemian comrades, who kissed him fervently, and wept beery tears at his departure, and, in obedience to his father's commands, returned to England and to respectability, to take up his position in the paternal counting-house, Mr. Statham was considerably more astonished than gratified at the manner in which his son's time had been passed, and at its too evident results. About Humphrey there was nothing which could be called slang in the English sense of the term, certainly nothing vulgar; but there was a reckless abandon, a defiance of set propriety, a superb scorn for the respectable conventionality regulating the movements and the very thoughts of the circle in which Mr. Statham moved, which that worthy gentleman observed with horror, and which he considered almost as loathsome as vice itself. Previous to his presentation to the establishment over which he was to rule, Humphrey's

long locks were clipped away, his light downy beard shaved off, his fantastic garments exchanged for sad-coloured soberly-cut clothes; and when this transformation had been accomplished, the young man was taken into the City and placed in the hands of Mr. Morrison the chief clerk, who was enjoined to give a strict account of his business qualifications. Mr. Morrison's report did not tend to dissipate the disappointment which had fallen like a blow on the old man's mind. Humphrey could talk German as glibly and with as good an accent as any Rhinelander from Manheim to Düsseldorf; he had picked up a vast amount of conversational French from the French artists who had formed part of his jolly society; and had command of an amount of argot which would have astonished Monsieur Philarète Chasles himself; but he had never been in the habit of either reading or writing anything but the smallest scraps of notes; and when Mr. Morrison placed before him a four-sided letter from their agent at Hamburg, couched in commercial German phraseology, and requested

him to re-translate and answer it, Humphrey's expressive face looked so woe-begone and he boggled so perceptibly over the manuscript, that one of the junior clerks saw the state of affairs at a glance, and confidentially informed his neighbour at the next desk that 'young S. was up a tree.'

It was impossible to hide these shortcomings from Mr. Statham, who was anxiously awaiting Mr. Morrison's report; and after reading it, and assuring himself of its correctness by a personal examination of his son, his manner, which ever since Humphrey's return had been frigid and reserved, grew harsh and stern. He took an early opportunity of calling Humphrey into his private room, and of informing him that he should have one month's probation, and that if he did not signally improve by the end of that time, he would be removed from the office, as his father did not choose to have one of his name the laughing-stock of those employed by him. The young man winced under this speech, which he received in silence, but in five minutes after

leaving his father's presence his mind was made up. He would go through the month's probation, since it was expected of him, but he would not make the smallest attempt to improve himself, and he would leave his future to chance. Punctually, on the very day that the month expired, Mr. Statham again sent for his son; told him he had discovered no more interest in, or inclination for, the business than he had shown on his first day of joining the house, and that in consequence he must give up all idea of becoming a partner, or, indeed, of having anything farther to do with the establishment. An allowance of two hundred pounds a year would be paid to him during his father's lifetime, and would be bequeathed to him in his father's will; he must never expect to receive anything else, and Mr. Statham broadly hinted, in conclusion, that it would be far more agreeable to him if his son would take up his residence anywhere than in Russell-square, and that he should feel particularly relieved if he never saw him again.

This arrangement suited Humphrey Sta-

tham admirably. Two hundred a year to a very young man, who has never had any command of money, is an important sum. He left the counting-house; and whatever respect and regard he may have felt for his father had been obliterated by the invariable sternness and opposition with which all his advances had been received. Two hundred a year! He would be off back at once to Rhineland, where, among the painters, he could live like a prince with such an income; and he went—and in six months came back again. The thing was changed somehow; it was not as it used to be. There were the same men, indeed, living the same kind of life, equally glad to welcome their English comrade, and to give him the run of their studios and their clubs and kneipes; but after a time this kind of life seemed very flat and vapid to Humphrey Statham. The truth is, that during his six weeks' office experience he had seen something of London; and on reflection he made up his mind that, after all, it was perhaps a more amusing place than any of the Rhine-

land towns. On his return to London he took a neat lodging, and for four or five years led a purposeless idle life, such a life as is led by hundreds of young men who are burdened with that curse—a bare sufficiency, scarcely enough to keep them, more than enough to prevent them from seeking employment, and to dull any aspirations which they may possess. It was during this period of his life that Humphrey made the acquaintance of Tom Durham, whose gaiety, recklessness, and charm of manner, fascinated him at once; and he himself took a liking to the frank, generous, high-spirited young man. Tom Durham's knowledge of the world made him conscious that, though indolent, and to a certain extent dissipated, Humphrey Statham was by no means depraved, and to his friend Mr. Durham therefore exhibited only the best side of his nature. He was engaged in some wild speculations just at that time, and it was while careering over the country with Tom Durham in search of a capitalist to float some marvellous invention of that fertile genius, that Humphrey

Statham met with an adventure which completely altered the current of his life.

They were making Leeds their head-quarters, but Tom Durham had gone over to Batley for a day or two, to see the owner of a shoddy mill, who was reported to be both rich and speculative; and Humphrey was left alone. He was strolling about in the evening, thinking what a horrible place Leeds was, and what a large sum of money a man ought to be paid for living in it, when he was overtaken and passed by a girl, walking rapidly in the direction of Headingley. The glimpse he caught of her face showed him that it was more than ordinarily beautiful, and Humphrey quickened his lazy pace, and followed her until he saw her safely housed in a small neat dwelling. The next day he made inquiries about this girl, the transient glance of whose face had made such an impression upon him, and found that her name was Emily Mitchell; that her father, now dead, had been a booking-clerk in one of the large factories; that she was employed in a draper's shop; and that she

lived with her uncle and aunt in the small house to which Humphrey had tracked her. Humphrey Statham speedily made Miss Mitchell's acquaintance, found her more beautiful than he had imagined, and as fascinating as she was lovely; fascinating not in the ordinary sense of the word, not by coquetry or blandishment, but by innate refinement, grace, and innocence. After seeing her and talking with her a few times, Humphrey could no longer control his feelings, and finding that he was not indifferent to Emily—his good looks, his frank nature, and his easy bearing, well qualified him to find favour in the eyes of such a girl—he spoke out plainly to her uncle, and told him how matters stood. He was in love with Emily, he said, and most anxious to marry, but his income was but 200*l.* a year, not sufficient to maintain her, even in the quiet way both he and she desired they should live; but he was young, and though he had been idle, now that he had an incentive to work he would show what he could do. It was possible that, seeing the difference in him,

his father might be inclined to relent, and put something in his way, or some of his father's friends might give him employment. He would go to London and seek for it at once, and so soon as he saw his way to earning 200*l.* a year in addition to his annuity, he would return and claim Emily for his wife.

In this view the uncle, a practical old north-countryman, coincided; the young people could not marry upon the income which Mr. Humphrey possessed; they had plenty of life before them; and when the young man came back and proved that he had carried out his promise, no obstacle should be made by Emily's friends.

Humphrey Statham returned to London, and wrote at once to his father, telling him that he had seen the errors of his youth, and was prepared to apply himself to any sort of business which his father could place in his way. In reply he received a curt note from Mr. Statham, stating that the writer did not know of any position which Humphrey could competently fulfil, reminding him of the agree-

ment between them, and hinting dislike at the reopening of any correspondence or communication. Foiled at this point, Humphrey Statham secretly took the advice of old Mr. Morrison, the chief clerk in his father's office, a kindly as well as a conscientious man, who had endeavoured to soften the young man's lot during the few weeks he had passed in the dull counting-house, and at his recommendation Humphrey established himself as a ship-broker, and for two years toiled on from morning till night, doing a small and not very remunerative business, but proving to such as employed him that he possessed industry, energy, and tact. During this period he ran down to Leeds, at four distinct intervals, to pass a couple of days with Emily, whose uncle had died, and who remained in the house of her helpless bed-ridden aunt. At the end of this time Mr. Statham died, leaving in his will a sum of 10,000*l.* to his son, 'as a recognition of his attempt to gain a livelihood for himself,' and bequeathing the rest of his fortune to various charities.

So at last Humphrey Statham saw his way to bringing Emily home in triumph as his wife, and with this object he started for Leeds, immediately after his father's funeral. He had written to her to announce his arrival, and was surprised not to find her awaiting him on the platform. Then he jumped into a cab, and hurried out to Headingley. On his arrival at the little house, the stupid girl who attended on the bed-ridden old woman seemed astonished at seeing him, and answered his inquiries after Emily inconsequently, and with manifest terror. With a sudden sinking of the heart Humphrey made his way to the old lady's bedside, and from her quivering lips learned that Emily had disappeared.

Yes! Emily had fled from her home, so said her aunt, and so said the few neighbours who, roused at the sight of a cab, had come crowding into the cottage. About a week ago, they told him, she had gone out in the morning to her work as usual, and had never returned. She left no letter of explanation, and no trace of her flight had been discovered;

there was no slur upon her character, and, so far as their knowledge went, she had made no strange acquaintance. She received a number of letters, which she had always said were from Mr. Statham. What did he come down there for speering after Emily, when, of all persons in the world, he was the likeliest to tell them where she had been?

Humphrey Statham fell back like a man stunned by a heavy blow. He had come down there to carry out the wish of his life; to tell the woman whom, in the inmost depths of his big manly heart he worshipped, that the hope of his life was at last accomplished, and that he was at length enabled to take her away, to give her a good position, and to devote the remainder of his existence to her service. She was not there to hear his triumphant avowal — she had fled, no one knew where, and he saw plainly enough that, not merely was all sympathy withheld from him, but that he was suspected by the neighbours to have been privy to, and probably the accomplice of, her flight, and that his arrival

there a few days afterwards with the apparent view of making inquiries was merely an attempt to hoodwink them, and to divert the search which might possibly be made after her into another direction.

Under such circumstances, an ordinary man would have fallen into a fury, and burst out into wild lamentation or passionate invective; but Humphrey Statham was not an ordinary man. He knew himself guiltless of the crime of which by Emily's friends and neighbours he was evidently suspected, but he also knew that the mere fact of her elopement, or at all events of her quitting her home without consulting him on the subject, showed that she had no love for him, and that therefore he had no right to interfere with her actions. He told the neighbours this in hard, measured accents, with stony eyes and colourless cheeks. But when he saw that even then they disbelieved him, that even then they thought he knew more of Emily Mitchell's whereabouts than he cared to say, he instructed the local authorities to make such inquiries as lay in

their power, and offered a reward for Emily Mitchell's discovery to the police. He returned to London an altered man; his one hope in life had been rudely extinguished, and there was nothing now left for him to care for. He had a competency, but it was valueless to him now; the only one way left to him of temporarily putting aside his great grief was by plunging into work, and busying his mind with those commercial details which at one time he had so fervently abhorred, and now, when it was no longer a necessity for him, business came to him in galore, his name and fame were established in the great City community, and no man in his position was more respected, or had a larger number of clients.

'Too late comes this apple to me,' muttered Humphrey Statham, quoting Owen Meredith, as he shook himself out of the reverie into which he had fallen. 'Nearly four years ago since I paid my last visit to Leeds; more than three since, as a last resource, I consulted the Scotland-yard people, and in-

structed them to do their best in elucidating the mystery. The Scotland-yard people are humbugs; I have never heard of them since, and shall never hear of Emily again. Good God, how I loved her! how I love her still! Was it that she stands out in my memory as my first and only real love, lit up perhaps by boyish fancy—the same fancy that makes me imagine that my old bare cock-loft in the Adelphi was better than my present comfortable rooms in Sackville-street. *Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans.* No, she was more than that. She was the only woman that ever inspired me with anything like real affection, and I worship her—her memory I suppose I must call it now—as I worshipped her own sweet self an hour before I learned of her flight. There, there is an end of that. Now let me finish-up this lot, and leave all in decent order, so that if I end my career in a snipe-bog, or one of the Tresco pilot-boats goes down while I am on board of her, old Collins may have no difficulty in disposing of the contents of the safe.'

Out of the mass of papers which had originally been lying before him, only two were left. He took up one of them and read the indorsement, 'T. Durham—to be delivered to him or his written order (Akhbar K).' This paper he threw into the second drawer of the safe; then he took up the last, inscribed 'Copy of instructions to Tatlow in regard to E. M.'

'Instructions to Tatlow, indeed!' said Humphrey Statham, with curling lip; 'it is more than three years since those instructions were given, but hitherto they have borne no fruit. I have half a mind to destroy them; it is scarcely possible—'

His reflections were interrupted by a knock at the door. Bidden to come in, Mr. Collins, the confidential clerk, put in his head, and murmured, 'Mr. Tatlow, from Scotland-yard.'

'In the very nick of time,' said Humphrey Statham, with a half-smile; 'send Mr. Tatlow in at once.'

CHAPTER X.

MR. TATLOW ON THE TRACK.

'MR. TATLOW?' said Humphrey Statham, as his visitor entered.

'Servant, sir,' said Mr. Tatlow, a somewhat ordinary-looking man, dressed in black.

'I had no idea this case had been placed in your hands, Mr. Tatlow,' said Humphrey. 'I have heard of you, though I have never met you before in business, and have always understood you to be an experienced officer.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Mr. Tatlow, with a short bow. 'What may have altered your opinion in that respect now?'

'The length of time which has elapsed since I first mentioned this matter in Scotland-yard. That was three years ago, and from that day to this I have had no communication with the authorities.'

'Well, sir, you see,' said Mr. Tatlow, 'dif-

ferent people have different ways of doing business; and when the inspector put this case into my hands, he said to me, "Tatlow," said he, "this is a case which will most likely take considerable time to unravel, and it's one in which there will be a great many ups and downs, and the scent will grow warm and the scent will grow cold, and you will think you have got the whole explanation of the story at one moment, and the next you'll think you know nothing at all about it. The young woman is gone," the inspector says, "and you'll hear of her here and you'll hear of her there, and you'll be quite sure you've got hold of the right party, and then you'll find it's nothing of the sort, and be inclined to give up the business in despair; and then suddenly, perhaps, when you're engaged on something else, you'll strike into the right track, and bring it home in the end. Now, it's no good worrying the gentleman," said the inspector, "with every little bit of news you hear, or with anything that may happen to strike you in the inquiry, for you'll be raising

his spirits at one time, and rendering him more wretched in another; and my advice to you is, not to go near him until you have got something like a clear and complete case to lay before him." Those were the inspector's words to me, sir—upon which advice I acted.'

'Very good counsel, Mr. Tatlow, and very sensible of you to follow it,' said Humphrey Statham. 'Am I to understand from this visit that your case is now complete?'

'Well, sir, as complete as I can make it at present,' said Mr. Tatlow.

'You have found her?' cried Humphrey Statham eagerly, the blood flushing into his cheeks.

'I know where the young woman is now,' said Mr. Tatlow evasively; 'but do not build upon that, sir,' he added, as he marked his questioner's look of anxiety. 'We were too late, sir; you will never see her again.'

'Too late!' echoed Humphrey. 'What do you mean? Where is she? I insist upon knowing!'

'In Hendon churchyard, sir,' said Mr. Tat-

low quietly; 'that's where the young woman is now.'

Humphrey Statham bowed his head, and remained silent for some few moments; then, without raising his eyes, he said: 'Tell me about it, Mr. Tatlow, please; I should like to have all details from first to last.'

'Don't you think,' said Mr. Tatlow kindly —'don't you think I might look in some other time, sir?—you don't seem very strong just now; and it's no use a man trying his nerves when there is no occasion for it.'

'Thank you,' said Humphrey Statham, 'I would sooner hear the story now. I have been ill, and am going out of town, and it may be some little time before I return, and I should like, while I am away, to be able to think over what has—to know about—tell me, please, at once.'

'The story is not a long one, sir,' said Mr. Tatlow; 'and when you see how plain and clear it tells, I daresay you will think the case was not a difficult one, for all it took so long to work out; but you see this is fancy-

work, as I may call it, that one has to take up in the intervals of regular business, and to lay aside again whenever a great robbery or a murder crops up, and just as one is warm and interested in it, one may be sent off to Paris or New York, and when you come back you have almost to begin again. There was one advantage in this case, that I had it to myself from the start, and hadn't to work up anybody else's line. I began,' continued Mr. Tatlow, after a momentary pause, taking a notebook from his pocket and reading from its pages, 'at the very beginning, and first saw the draper people at Leeds, where Miss Mitchell was employed. They spoke very highly of her, as a good, industrious girl, and were very sorry when she went away. She gave them a regular month's notice, stating that she had an opportunity of bettering herself by getting an engagement at a first-class house in London. Did the Leeds drapers, Hodder by name, say anything to Miss M.'s friends? No, they did not,' continued Mr. Tatlow, answering himself; 'most likely they would have

mentioned it if the uncle had been alive—a brisk, intelligent man—but he was dead at that time, and no one was left but the bed-ridden old woman. After her niece's flight she sent down to Hodder and Company, and they told her what Miss M. had told them, though the old woman and her friends plainly did not believe it. It was not until some weeks afterwards that one of Hodder's girls had a letter from a friend of hers, who had previously been with their firm, but was now engaged at Mivenson's, the great drapers in Oxford-street, London, to say that Emily Mitchell had joined their establishment; she was passing under the name of Moore, but this girl knew her at once, and agreed to keep her confidence. Now to page forty-nine. That's only a private memorandum for my own information,' said Mr. Tatlow, turning over the leaves of his book. 'Page forty-nine. Here you are! Mivenson's, in Oxford-street—old gentleman out of town—laid up with the gout—saw eldest son, partner in the house—recollected Miss Moore perfectly, and had come to

them with some recommendation—never took young persons into their house unless they were properly recommended, and always kept register of reference. Looking into register found Emily M. had been recommended by Mrs. Calverley, one of their customers, most respectable lady, living in Great Walpole-street. Made inquiry myself about Mrs. C., and made her out to be a prim, elderly, evangelical party, wife of City man in large way of business. Emily M. did not remain long at Mivenson's. Not a strong girl; had had a fainting fit or two while in their employ, and one day she wrote to say she was too ill to come to work, and they never saw her again. Could they give him the address from which she wrote? Certainly. Address-book sent for; 143 Great College-street, Camden Town. Go to page sixty. Landlady at Great College-street perfectly recollected Miss Moore. Quiet, delicate girl, regular in her habits; never out later than ten at night; keeping no company, and giving no trouble. Used to be brought home regular every night by a gentleman—always

the same gentleman, landlady thought, but couldn't swear, as she had never made him out properly, though she had often tried. Seen from the area, landlady remarked, people looked so different. Gentleman always took leave of Miss Moore at the door, and was never seen again in the neighbourhood until he brought her back the next night. Landlady recollected Miss Moore's going away. When she gave notice about leaving, explained to landlady that she was ill and was ordered change of air; didn't seem to be any worse than she had been all along, but, of course, it was not her (the landlady's) place to make any objection. At the end of the week a cab was sent for, Miss Moore's boxes were put into it, and she drove away. Did the landlady hear the address given to the cabman? She did. "Waterloo Station, Richmond line." That answer seemed to me to screw up the whole proceedings; trying to find the clue to a person, who, months before, had gone away from the Waterloo Station, seemed as likely as feeling for a threepenny-piece in a corn-sack.

I made one or two inquiries, but heard nothing, and had given the whole thing up for as good as lost, when—let me see, page two hundred and one.

'Here you are! Memoranda in the case of Benjamin Biggs, cashier in the Limpid Water Company, charged with embezzlement. Fine game he kept up, did Mr. Biggs. Salary about two hundred a year, and lived at the rate of ten thousand. Beautiful place out of town, just opposite Bobbington Lock, horses, carriages, and what you please. I was engaged in Biggs' matter, and I had been up to Bobbington one afternoon—for there was a notion just then that Biggs hadn't got clear off and might come home again—so I thought I'd take a lodging and hang about the village for a week or two. It was pleasant summer weather, and I've a liking for the river and for such a place as Bushey Park, though not with many opportunities of seeing much of either. I had been through Biggs' house, and was standing in Messenger's boat-yard, looking at the parties putting off in the water,

when a voice close to my ear says, "Hallo, Tatlow! What's up?" and looking round I saw Mr. Netherton Whiffle, the leading junior at the Bailey, and the most rising man at the C.C.C. I scarcely knew him at first, for he had got on a round straw hat instead of his wig, and a tight-fitting jersey instead of his gown; and when I recognised him and told him what business I had come down upon, he only laughed, and said that Biggs knew more than me and all Scotland-yard put together; and the best thing that I could do was to go into the "Anglers" and put my name to what I liked at his expense. He's a very pleasant fellow, Mr. Whiffle; and while I was drinking something iced I told him about my wanting a lodging, and he recommended me to a very respectable little cottage kept by the mother of his gardener. A pretty place it was too, not looking on the river, but standing in a nice neatly-kept garden, with the big trees of Bushey Park at the back of you, and the birds singing beautiful. I fancy, when I am superannuated I should like a place of that

sort for myself and Mrs. T. Nice rooms too; the lodgings, a bedroom and sitting-room, but a cut above my means. I was saying so to the old woman—motherly old creature she was—as we were looking round the bedroom, when I caught sight of something which fixed my attention at once. It was an old black box, like a child's school-trunk, with on the outside lid "E. M." in brass letters, and a railway label of the G.N.R., "Leeds to London," still sticking on it. Something told me I had "struck ile," as the Yankees say; and I asked the old woman to whom that box belonged. "To her," she said, she supposed; "leastways it had been there for many months, left behind by a lodger who had gone away and never sent for it." It took a little hot rum-and-water to get the lodger's story out of that old lady, sir; not a refreshing drink on a summer's day, but required to be gone through in the course of duty, and it was worth it, as you will see.

'In the previous summer the rooms had been taken by a gentleman who gave the name

of Smith, and who the next day brought down the young lady and her boxes. She was pretty but very delicate-looking, and seemed to have very bad health. He came down three or four times a week, and then she brightened up a bit, and seemed a little more cheerful; but when she was alone she was dreadfully down, and the landlady had seen her crying by the hour together. They lived very quietly; no going out, no water-parties, no people to see them, bills of lodging paid for every week; quite the regular thing. This went on for two or three months; then the gentleman's visits grew less frequent, he only came down once or twice a week, and, on more than one occasion, the old woman sitting in the kitchen thought she heard high words between them. One Saturday afternoon, when Mr. Smith had gone away, about an hour after his departure the lady packed all her things, paid up the few shillings which remained after his settlement, and ordered a fly to take her to the station. There was no room on the fly for the little box which I had seen, and she said

she would send an address to which it could be forwarded. On the Monday evening Mr. Smith came down as usual; he was very much astonished to find the lady gone, but, after reading a letter which she had left for him, he seemed very much agitated, and sent out for some brandy; then he paid the week's rent, which was demanded instead of the notice, and left the place. The box had never been sent for, nor had the old woman ever heard anything farther of the lady or the gentleman.

'The story hangs together pretty well, don't it, sir? E. M. and the railway ticket on the box (I forgot to say that I looked inside, and saw the maker's name, "Hudspeth, of Boar-lane, Leeds) looked pretty much like Emily Mitchell, and the old woman's description of Mr. Smith tallied tolerably with that given by the lodging-house keeper in Camden Town, who used to notice the gentleman from the area. But there we were shut up tight again. The flyman recollected taking the lady

to the station, but no one saw her take her ticket; and there was I at a standstill.

'It is not above a fortnight ago, sir,' said Mr. Tatlow, in continuation, 'that I struck on the scent again; not that I had forgotten it, or hadn't taken the trouble to pull at anything which I thought might be one of its threads when it came in my way. A twelvemonth ago I was down at Leeds, after a light-hearted chap who had forgotten his own name, and written his master's across the back of a three-and-sixpenny bill-stamp; and I thought I'd take the opportunity of looking in at Hodder the draper's, and ask whether anything had been heard of Miss M. The firm hadn't heard of her, and was rather grumpy about being asked; but I saw the girl from whom I had got some information before—she, you recollect, sir, who had a friend at Mivenson's in Oxford-street, and told me about E. M. being there—and I asked her and her young man to tea, and set the pumps agoing. But she was very bashful and shamefaced, and would not say a word, though evidently she knew something;

and it was only when she had gone up to put her bonnet on, that I got out of the young man that Emily Mitchell had been down there, and had been seen in the dusk of the evening going up to the old cottage at Headingley, and carrying a baby in her arms.'

'A baby!' cried Humphrey Statham.

'Yes, sir,' said Mr. Tatlow, 'a female child a few weeks old. She was going up to her aunt, no doubt, but the old woman was dead. When they heard at Hodder's that Emily was about the place, and with a child too, the firm was furious, and gave orders that none of their people should speak to or have any communication with her; but this girl—Mary Keith she's called; I made a note of her name, sir, thinking you would like to know it—she found out where the poor creature was, and offered to share her wages with her and the child to save them from starvation.'

'Good God!' groaned Humphrey Statham; 'was she in want, then?'

'Pretty nearly destitute, sir,' said Tatlow; 'would have starved probably, if it had not

been for Mary Keith. She owned up to that girl, sir, all her story, told her everything, except the name of the child's father, and that she could not get out of her anyhow. She spoke about you too, and said you were the only person in the world who had really loved her, and that she had treated you shamefully. Miss Keith wanted her to write to the child's father, and tell him how badly off she was; but she said she would sooner die in the streets than ask him for money. What she would do, she said, would be to go to you—she wanted to see you once more before she died—and to ask you to be a friend to her child! She knew you would do it, she said—though she had behaved to you so badly—for the sake of old days.

'I sha'n't have to try you with very much more, sir,' said Tatlow kindly, as he heard a deep groan break from Humphrey Statham's lips, and saw his head sink deeper on his breast. 'Miss Keith advised E. M. to write to you; but she said no—she wanted to look upon your face again before she died, she said, and she

knew that event was not far off. So she parted with her old friend, taking a little money, just enough to pay her fare up to town. She must have changed her mind about that, from what I learned afterwards. I made inquiries here and there for her in London in what I thought likely places, but I could hear nothing of her, so the scent grew cold, and still my case was incomplete. I settled it up at last, as I say, about a fortnight ago. I had occasion to make some inquiries at Hendon workhouse about a young man who was out on the tramp, and who, as I learned, had slept there for a night or two in the previous week; and I was talking matters over with the master, an affable kind of man, with more common-sense than one usually finds in officials of his sort, who are for the most part pig-headed and bad-tempered. The chap that I was after had been shopman to a grocer in the City, and had run away with his master's daughter, having all the time another wife; and this I suppose led the conversation to such matters; and I, always with your case floating in my head, asked him

whether there were many instances of foundlings and suchlike being left upon their hands? He said no; that they had been very lucky—only had one since he had been master there, and that one they had been fortunate enough to get rid of. How was that, I asked him; what was the case? Case of a party'—and here Mr. Tatlow referred to his note-book again—'found the winter before last by Squire Mullins' hind lying against a haystack in the four-acre meadow, pressing her baby to her breast — both of them half-frozen. She was taken to the workhouse, but only lived two days, and never spoke during that time. Her shoes were worn very thin, and she had parted with most of her clothing, though what she kept had been good, and still was decent. No wedding-ring, of course. One thing she hadn't parted with; the master's wife saw the old woman try to crib it from the dead body round whose neck it hung, and took it from her hand. It was a tiny gold cross—yes, sir, I see you know it all now—inscribed "H. to E., 30th March 1864"— the very trinket

which you had described to our people; and when I heard that, I knew I had tracked Emily Mitchell home at last.'

Mr. Tatlow ceased speaking; but it was some minutes before Humphrey Statham raised his head. When at length he looked up, there were traces of tears on his cheeks, and his voice was broken with emotion as he said, 'The child—what about it? did it live?'

'Yes, sir,' replied Tatlow, 'the child lived, and fell very comfortably upon its legs. It was a bright, pretty little creature, and one day it attracted the notice of a lady who had no children of her own, and, after some inquiries, persuaded her husband to adopt it.'

'What is her name, and where does she live?' asked Mr. Statham.

'She lives at Hendon, sir, and her name is Claxton. Mr. Claxton is, oddly enough, a sleeping partner in the house of Mr. Calverley, whose good lady first recommended E. M. to Mivenson's, as you may recollect.'

There was silence for full ten minutes—a period which Mr. Tatlow occupied in a deep

consultation with his note-book, in looking out of window, at the tips of his boots, at the wall in front of him; anywhere rather than at the bowed head of Humphrey Statham, who remained motionless, with his chin buried in his chest. Mr. Tatlow had seen a good deal of suffering in his time, and as he noticed, without apparently looking at the tremulous emotion of Mr. Statham's hands, tremulous despite their closely-interlaced fingers, and the shudder which from time to time ran through his massive frame, he knew what silent anguish was being bravely undergone, and would on no account have allowed the sufferer to imagine that his mental tortures were either seen or understood. When Humphrey Statham at length raised his head, he found his visitor intently watching the feeble gyrations of a belated fly, and apparently perfectly astonished at hearing his name mentioned.

'Mr. Tatlow,' said Humphrey, in a voice which, despite his exertions to raise it, sounded low and muffled, 'I am very much your debtor; what I said at the commencement of our inter-

view about the delay which, as I imagined, had occurred in clearing-up this mystery, was spoken in ignorance, and without any knowledge of the facts. I now see the difficulties attendant upon the inquiry, and I am only astonished that they should have been so successfully surmounted, and that you should have been enabled to clear-up the case as perfectly as you have done. That the result of your inquiries has been to arouse in me the most painful memories, and to—and to reduce me in fact to the state in which you see me—is no fault of yours. You have discharged your duty with great ability and wondrous perseverance, and I have to thank you more than all for the delicacy which you have shown during the inquiry, and during the narration to me of its results.'

Mr. Tatlow bowed, but said nothing.

'For the ordinary charges of the investigation,' continued Humphrey Statham, 'your travelling expenses and suchlike, I settle, I believe, with the people at Scotland-yard; but,' he added, as he took his cheque-book from the

right-hand drawer of his desk, 'I wish you to accept for yourself this cheque for fifty pounds, together with my hearty thanks.'

He filled-up the cheque, tore it from the book, and pushed it over to the detective as he spoke, at the same time holding out his hand.

Mr. Tatlow rose to his feet, looking somewhat embarrassed. It had often been his good fortune to be well paid for his services, but to be shaken hands with by a man in the position of Mr. Statham, had not previously come in his way. He was confused for an instant, but compromised the matter by gravely saluting after the military fashion with his left hand, while he gave his right to his employer.

'Proud, sir, and grateful,' he said. 'It has been a long case, though nct a particularly stiff one, and I think it has been worked clean out to the end. I could have wished—but, however, that is neither here nor there,' said Mr. Tatlow, checking himself with a cough. 'About the child, sir; don't you wish any farther particulars about the child?'

'No,' said Humphrey Statham, who was fast relapsing into his moody state; 'no, nothing now, at all events. If I want any farther information, I shall send to you, Tatlow, direct; you may depend upon that. Now, once more, thanks, and good-bye.'

Half an hour had elapsed since Mr. Tatlow had taken his departure, and still Humphrey Statham sat at his desk buried in profound reverie, his chin resting on his breast, his arms plunged almost elbow-deep into his pockets. At length he roused himself, locked away the cheque-book which lay fluttering open before him, and passing his hand dreamily through the fringe of hair on his temples, muttered to himself:

'And so there is an end of it. To die numbed and frozen in a workhouse-bed. To bear a child to a man for whom she ruined my life, and who in his turn ruined hers. My Emily perishing with cold and want! I shall meet him yet, I know I shall. Long before I heard of this story, when I looked upon him

only as a successful rival, who was living with her in comfort and luxury, and laughing over my disappointment, even then I felt convinced that the hour would come when I should hold him by the throat and make him beg his miserable life at my hands. Now, when I know that his treatment of her has been worse even than his treatment of me, he will need to beg hard indeed for mercy, if I once come across his path. Calverley, eh?' he continued, after a moment's pause, and in a softer voice, 'the husband of the lady who has adopted the child, is a partner in Calverley's house, Tatlow said. That is the house for which Tom Durham has gone out as agent. How strangely things come about! for surely Mrs. Calverley, doubtless the wife of the senior partner of the firm, is the mother of my old friend Martin Gurwood? What two totally different men! Without doubt unacquainted with each other, and yet with this curious link of association in my mind. Her child! Emily's child within a couple of hours' ride! I could easily find some excuse to introduce myself to this Mrs.

Claxton, and to get a glimpse of the girl—she is Emily's flesh and blood, and most probably would be like her. I have half a mind to—No, I am not well enough for any extra excitement or exertion, and the child, Tatlow says, is happy and well-cared for; I can see her on my return—I can then manage the introduction in a more proper and formal manner; I can hunt-up Martin Gurwood, and through him and his mother I can obtain an introduction to this partner in Calverley's house, and must trust to my own powers of making myself agreeable to continue the acquaintance on a footing of intimacy, which will give me constant opportunities of seeing Emily's child. Now there is more than ever necessity to get out of this at once. All clear now, except those two packets; one Tom Durham's memorandum, which must be kept anyhow, so in it goes into the safe. The other, the instructions for Tatlow—that can be destroyed—no, there is no harm in keeping that for a little; one never knows how things may turn out—in it goes too.' And as he spoke he

placed the two packets in the drawer, closed and locked the safe. 'Collins!' he called; and the confidential clerk appeared. 'You have all that you want—the cheques, the duplicate key of the safe, the pass-book?'

'Yes, sir,' said Collins; 'everything except your address.'

'By Jove,' said Humphrey Statham, 'I had forgotten that! even now I am undecided. Tossing shall do it. Heads the Drumnovara snipe-bog; tails the Tresco pilot-boat. Tails it is! the pilot-boat has won. So, Collins, my address—never to be used except in most urgent necessity—is, "P.O., Tresco, Scilly," left till called for. Now you have my traps in the outer office; tell them to put them on a hansom cab, and you will see no more of me for six weeks.'

As the four-fifty 'galloper' for Exeter glided out of the Paddington Station, Humphrey Statham was seated in it, leisurely cutting the leaves of the evening paper which he had just

purchased. The first paragraph which met his eye ran as follows:

'(REUTER'S TELEGRAM.)

'*Gibraltar.*

'The captain of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steam-ship Masillia, just arrived here, announces the supposed death, by drowning, of a passenger named Durham, agent to Messrs. Calverley and Company, of Mincing-lane, who was proceeding to Ceylon. The unfortunate gentleman retired to bed on the first night of the vessel's sailing from Southampton, and as he was never seen afterwards, it is supposed he must have fallen overboard during the night, when the Masillia was at anchor off Hurst Castle.'

CHAPTER XI.

L'AMIE DE LA MAISON.

THE breakfasts in Great Walpole-street, looked upon as meals, were neither satisfactory nor satisfying. Of all social gatherings a breakfast is perhaps the one most difficult to make agreeable to yourself and your guests. There are men, at other periods of the day bright, sociable, and chatty, who insist upon breakfasting by themselves, who glower over their tea and toast, and growl audibly if their solitude is broken in upon; there are women capable of everything in the way of self-sacrifice and devotion except getting up to breakfast. A breakfast after the Scotch fashion, with enormous quantities of Finnan-haddy, chops, steaks, eggs and ham, jam and marmalade, tea and coffee, is a good thing; so is a French breakfast, with two delicate cutlets, or a succulent

filet, a savoury omelette, a pint bottle of Nuits, a chasse, and a cigarette. But the morning meals in Great Walpole-street were not after either of these fashions. After the servants had risen from their knees, and shuffled out of the room in Indian file at the conclusion of morning prayers, the butler re-entered bearing a hissing silver urn, behind which Mrs. Calverley took up her position, and proceeded to brew a tepid amber-coloured fluid, which she afterwards dispensed to her guests. The footman had followed the butler, bearing, in his turn, a dish containing four thin greasy strips of bacon, laid out side by side in meek resignation, with a portion of kidney keeping guard over them at either end. There was a rack filled with dry toast, which looked and tasted like the cover of an old Latin dictionary; there was a huge bread-platter, with a scriptural text round its margin, and a huge bread-knife with a scriptural text on its blade; and on the sideboard, far away in the distance, was the shadowy outline of what had once been a ham, and a mountain and a promontory of flesh,

with the connecting link between them almost cut away, representing what had once been a tongue. On two or three occasions, shortly after Madame Du Tertre had first joined the household, she mentioned to Mrs. Calverley that she was subject to headaches, which were only to be gotten rid of by taking a sharp half-hour's walk in the air immediately after breakfast; the fact being that Pauline was simply starved, and that if she had been followed she would have been found in the small room of Monsieur Verrey's café in Regent-street engaged with a cutlet, a pint of Beaune, and the *Siècle* newspaper. To John Calverley, also, these gruesome repasts were most detestable, but he made up for his enforced starvation by a substantial and early luncheon in the City.

On the morning after Humphrey Statham's departure for Cornwall, the breakfast-party was assembled in Great Walpole-street. But the host was not among them. He had gone away to his ironworks in the North, as he told his guest: 'on his own vagaries,' as his wife

had phrased it, with a defiant snort: and Mrs. Calverley, Madame Du Tertre, and Martin Gurwood were gathered round the festive board. The two ladies were sipping the doubtful tea, and nibbling the leathery toast, while Mr. Gurwood, who was an early riser, and who, before taking his morning constitutional in Guelph Park, had solaced himself with a bowl of bread-and-milk, had pushed aside his plate, and was reading out from the *Times* such scraps of intelligence as he thought might prove interesting. On a sudden he stopped, the aspect of his face growing rather grave, as he said:

'Here is some news, mother, which I am sure will prove distressing to Mr. Calverley, even if his interests do not suffer from the event which it records.'

'I can guess what it is,' said Mrs. Calverley, in her thin acid voice; 'I have an intuitive idea of what has occurred. I always predicted it, and I took care to let Mr. Calverley know my opinion—the Swartmoor Iron works have failed?'

'No, not so bad as that,' said Mr. Gurwood, 'nor, indeed, is it any question of the Swartmoor Ironworks. I will tell you what is said, and you will be able to judge for yourself how far Mr. Calverley may be interested.' And in the calm, measured tone habitual to him from constant pulpit practice, Martin Gurwood read out the paragraph which had so startled Humphrey Statham on the previous evening.

When Martin Gurwood finished reading, Madame Du Tertre, who had listened attentively, wheeled round in her chair and looked hard at Mrs. Calverley. That lady's placidity was, however, perfectly undisturbed. With her thin bony hand she still continued her employment of arranging into fantastic shapes the crumbs on the table-cloth, nor did she seem inclined to speak until Pauline said:

'To me this seems a sad and terrible calamity. If I, knowing nothing of this unfortunate gentleman, am grieved at what I hear, surely you, madame, to whom he was

doubtless well known, must feel the shock acutely.'

'I am glad to say,' said Mrs. Calverley coldly, 'that I am not called upon to exhibit any emotion in the present instance. So little does Mr. Calverley think fit to acquaint me with the details of his business, that I was not aware that it was in contemplation to establish an agency at Ceylon, nor did I ever hear of the name of the person who, doubtless by his own imprudence, seems to have lost his life.'

'You never saw Mr. — Mr. — how is he called, Monsieur Gurwood?'

'Durham is the name given here,' said Martin, referring to the newspaper.

'Ah, you never saw Mr. Durham, madame?'

'I never saw him; I never even heard Mr. Calverley mention his name.'

'Poor man, poor man!' murmured Madame Du Tertre with downcast eyes; 'lost so suddenly, as your Shakespeare says—"sent to his account with all his imperfections on his head."

It is terrible to think of, is it not Monsieur Martin?'

'To be cut off with our sins yet inexpiated,' said Martin Gurwood, not meeting the searching glance riveted upon him, 'is, as you say, Madame Du Tertre, a terrible thing. Let us trust this unfortunate man was not wholly unprepared.'

'If he were a friend of Mr. Calverley's,' hissed the lady at the end of the table, 'and he must have been to have been placed in a positon of trust, it is, I should say, most improbable that he was fitted for the sudden change.'

That morning Madame Du Tertre, although her breakfast had been of the scantiest, did not find it necessary to repair to Verrey's. When the party broke up she retired to her room, took the precaution of locking the door, and having something to think out, at once adopted her old resource of walking up and down.

She said to herself: 'The news has arrived, and just at the time that I expected it. He

has been bold, and everything has turned out exactly as he could have wished. People will speak kindly of him and mourn over his fate, while he is far away and living happily, and laughing in his sleeve at the fools whose compassion he evokes. What would I give to be there with him on the same terms as those of the old days! I hate this dull British life, this ghastly house, these people, precise, exact, and terrible. I loathe the state of formality in which I live, the restraint and reticence I am obliged to observe! What is it to me to ride in a carriage by the side of that puppet downstairs, to sit in the huge dull rooms, to be waited upon by the silent solemn servants?' And her eyes blazed with fire as she sang in a soft low voice:

'Les gueux, les gueux
Sont les gens heureux;
Ils s'aiment entre eux.
Vivent les gueux!'

As she ceased singing she stopped suddenly in her walk, and said, 'What a fool I am to think of such things, to dream of what might

have been, when all my hope and desire is to destroy what is, to discover the scene of Tom Durham's retreat, and to drive him from the enchanted land where he and she are now residing! And this can only be done by steady continuance in my present life, by passive endurance, by never-flagging energy and perpetual observation. Tiens! Have I not done some good this morning, even in listening to the bêtise talk of that silly woman and her sombre son? 'She had never seen Tom Durham,' she said, 'had never heard of him, he has never been brought to the house:' this, then, gives colour to all that I have suspected. It is, as I imagined, through the influence of the old man Claxton that Tom was nominated as agent of the house of Calverley. Mr. Calverley himself probably knows nothing of him, or he would most assuredly have mentioned the name to his wife, have asked him to dinner, after the English fashion, before sending him out to such a position. But no, his very name is unknown to her, and it is evident that he is the sole protégé of Monsieur Claxton—

Claxton, from whom the pale-faced woman who is his wife, his mistress—what do I know or care—obtained the money with which Tom Durham thought to buy my silence and his freedom. Not yet, my dear friend, not yet! The game between us promises to be long, and to play it properly with a chance of success will require all my brains and all my patience. But the cards are already beginning to get shuffled into their places, and the luck has already declared on my side.'

A few mornings afterwards Mrs. Calverley, on coming down to breakfast, held an open paper in her hand; laying it on the table and pointing at it with her bony finger, when the servants had left the room, she said, 'I have an intimation here that Mr. Calverley will return this evening. He has not thought fit to write to me, but a telegram has been received from him at the office; and the head-clerk, who, I am thankful to say, still preserves some notion of what is due to me, has forwarded the information.'

'Is not this return somewhat unexpected?'

asked Pauline, looking inquisitively at her hostess.

'Mr. Calverley's return is never either unexpected or expected by me,' said the lady; 'he is immersed in business, which I trust may prove as profitable as he expects, though in my father's time—'

'Perhaps,' interrupted Martin Gurwood, cutting in to prevent the repetition of that wail over the decadence of the ancient firm which he had heard a thousand times, 'perhaps Mr. Calverley's return has on this occasion been hastened by the news of the loss of his agent, which I read out to you the other day. There is more about it in the paper this morning.'

'More! What more?' cried Pauline, eagerly.

'Nothing satisfactory, I am sorry to say. The body has not been found, nor is there any credible account of how the accident happened; the farther news is contained in a letter from one of the passengers. It seems that this unfortunate gentleman, Mr. Durham,

had, even during the short time which he was on board the ship, succeeded in making himself very popular with the passengers. He had talked to some of them of the importance of the position which he was going out to fill, of his devotion to business and to his employer; and it is agreed on all sides that the well-known firm of which he was the agent will find it difficult to replace him, so zealous and so interested in their behalf did he show himself. He was one of the last who retired to rest; and when in the morning he did not put in an appearance, nothing was thought of it, as it was imagined — not that he had succumbed to sea-sickness, as he had described himself as an old sailor, who had made many voyages —but that he was fatigued by the exertions of the previous day. Late in the evening, as nothing had been heard of him, the captain resolved to send the steward to his cabin; and the man returned with the report that the door was unlocked, the berth unoccupied, and Mr. Durham not to be found. An inquiry was at once set on foot, and a search made

throughout the ship; but without any result. The only idea that could be arrived at was, that, finding the heat oppressive, or being unable to sleep, he made his way to the deck, and, in the darkness of the night, had missed his footing and fallen overboard. Against this supposition was the fact that Mr. Durham was not in the least the worse for liquor when last seen, and that neither the officers nor the men on duty throughout the night had heard any splash in the water or any cry for help. The one thing certain was, that the man was gone; and all that could now be done was to transship his baggage at Gibraltar, that it might be returned to England, and to make public the circumstances for the information of his friends.'

'It seems to me,' said Martin Gurwood, as he finished reading, 'that unless the drowning of this poor man had actually been witnessed, nothing could be much clearer. He is seen to retire to rest in the night; he is never heard of again; there is no reason why he should attempt self-destruction; on the contrary, he is

represented as glorying in the position to which he had been appointed, and full of life, health, and spirits.'

'There is one point,' said Mrs. Calverley, 'to which I think exception may be taken, and that is, that he was sober. These sort of persons have, I am given to understand, a great tendency to drink and vice of every description, and the fact that he was probably a boon companion of Mr. Calverley's, and on that account appointed to this agency, makes me think it more than likely that he had a private store of liquor, and was drowned when in a state of intoxication.'

'There is nothing in the evidence which has been made public,' said Martin Gurwood, in a hard caustic tone, 'to warrant any supposition of that kind. In any case, it is not for us to judge the dead and—'

'Perhaps,' said Pauline, interposing, to avert the storm which she saw gathering in Mrs. Calverley's knitted brows, 'perhaps when Mr. Calverley returns to-night, he will be able to give us some information on the subject.

A man so trusted, and appointed to such a position, must naturally be well known to his employer.'

The lamps were lit in the drawing-room, and the solemn servants were handing round the tea, when a cab rattled up to the door, and immediately afterwards John Calverley, enveloped in his travelling-coat and many wrappers, burst into the apartment. He made his way to his wife, who was seated at the Berlin-wool frame, on which the Jael and Sisera had been supplanted by a new and equally interesting subject, and bending down offered her a salute, which she received on the tip of her ear; he shook hands heartily with Martin Gurwood, politely with Pauline, and then discarding his outer garments, planted himself in the middle of the room, smiling pleasantly, and inquired, 'Well, what's the news?'

'There is no news here,' said Mrs. Calverley, looking across the top of the Berlin-wool frame with stony glance; 'those who have been careering about the country are most likely

to gather light and frivolous gossip. Do you desire any refreshment, Mr. Calverley?'

'No, thank you, my dear,' said John. 'I had dinner at six o'clock, at Peterborough—swallowed it standing—cold meat, roll, glass of ale. You know the sort of thing, Martin—hurried, but not bad, you know—not bad.'

'But after such a slight refreshment, Monsieur Calverley,' said Pauline, rising and going towards him, 'you would surely like some tea?'

'No, thank you, Madame Du Tertre; 'no tea for me. I will have a little—a little something hot later on, perhaps — and you too, Martin, eh?—no, I forgot, you are no good at that sort of thing. And so,' he added, turning to his wife, 'you have, you say, no news?'

'Mrs. Calverley does herself injustice in saying any such thing,' said Pauline, interposing; 'the interests of the husband are the interests of the wife, and, when it is permitted, of the wife's friends; and we have all been distressed beyond measure to hear of the sad fate which has befallen your trusted agent.'

'Eh,' said John Calverley, looking at her

blankly, 'my trusted agent? I don't understand you.'

'These celebrated Swartmoor Ironworks are not beyond the reach of the post-office, I presume?' said Mrs. Calverley, with a vicious chuckle.

'Certainly not,' said John.

'And telegrams occasionally find their way there, I suppose?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'How is it, then, Mr. Calverley, that you have not heard what has been in all the newspapers, that some man named Durham, calling himself your agent, has been drowned on his way to India, where he was going in your employ?'

'Drowned!' said John Calverley, turning very pale, 'Tom Durham drowned! Is it possible?'

'Not merely possible, but strictly true,' said his wife. 'And what I want to know is, how is it that you, buried down at your Swartmoors, or whatever you call them, have not heard of it before?'

'It is precisely because I was buried down there that the news failed to reach me. When I am at the ironworks I have so short a time at my disposal that I never look at the newspapers, and the people at Mincing-lane have strict instructions never to communicate with me by letter or telegram except in the most pressing cases; and Mr. Jeffreys, I imagine, with that shrewdness which distinguishes him, saw that the reception of such news as this would only distress me, while I could be of no possible assistance, and so wisely kept it back until my return.'

'I am sure I don't see why you should be so distressed because one of your clerks got drunk and fell overboard,' said Mrs. Calverley. 'I know that in my father's time—'

'This Mr. Durham must have been an especially gifted man, I suppose, or you would scarcely have appointed him to such an important berth? Was it not so?' asked Pauline.

'Yes,' said Mr. Calverley, hesitating. 'Tom Durham was a smart fellow enough.'

'What I told you,' said Mrs. Calverley,

looking round. 'A smart fellow, indeed! but not company for his employer's wife, whatever he may have been for—'

'He was a man whom I knew but little of, Jane,' said John Calverley, with a certain amount of sternness in his voice; 'but he was introduced to me by a person of whom I have the highest opinion, and whom I wished to serve. On this recommendation I took Mr. Durham, and the little I saw of him was certainly in favour of his zeal and brightness. Now, if you please, we will change the conversation.'

That night, again, Madame Du Tertre might have been seen pacing her room. 'The more I see of these people,' she said to herself, 'the more I learn of the events with which my life is bound up, so much the more am I convinced that my first theory was the right one. This Monseiur Calverley, the master of this house—what was his reason for being annoyed, contrarié, as he evidently was, at being questioned about Durham? Simply because he himself knew nothing about him, and could

not truthfully reply to the pestering inquiries of that anatomie vivante, his wife, as to who he was, and why he had not been presented to her, the reigning queen of the great firm. Was I not right there in my anticipations? "He was introduced to me," he said, "by a person of whom I have the highest opinion, and whom I wished to serve;" that person, without doubt, was Claxton—Claxton, the old man, who, in his turn, was the slave of the pale-faced woman, whom Tom Durham had befooled! A bon chat, bon rat! They are well suited, these others, and Messrs. Calverley and Claxton are the dupes, though perhaps' —and she stopped pondering, with knitted brow—'Mr. Calverley knows all, or rather half, and is helping his friend and partner in the matter. I will take advantage of the first opportunity to press this subject farther home with Monsieur Calverley, who is a sufficiently simple bon homme; and perhaps I may learn something that may be useful to me from him.'

The opportunity which Pauline sought oc-

curred sooner than she expected. On the very next evening, Martin Gurwood being away from home, attending some public meeting on a religious question, and Mrs. Calverley being detained in her room finishing some letters which she was anxious to dispatch, Pauline found herself in the drawing-room before dinner, with her host as her sole companion.

When she entered she saw that Mr. Calverley had the newspaper in his hand, but his eyes were half closed and his head was nodding desperately. 'You are fatigued, monsieur, by the toils of the day,' she said. 'I fear I interrupted you?'

'No,' said John Calverley, jumping up, 'not at all, Madame Du Tertre; I was having just forty winks, as we say in English; but I am quite refreshed and all right now, and am very glad to see you.'

'It must be hard work for you, having all the responsibility of that great establishment in the City on your shoulders.'

'Well, you see, Madame Du Tertre,' said John, with a pleasant smile, 'the fact is I am

not so young as I used to be, and though I work no more, indeed considerably less, I find myself more tired at the end of the day.'

'Ah, monsieur,' said Pauline, 'that is the great difference between the French and English commerce, as it appears to me. In France our négociants have not merely trusted clerks such as you have here, but they have partners who enjoy their utmost confidence, who are as themselves, in fact, in all matters of their business.'

'Yes, madame, but that is not confined to France; we have exactly the same thing in England. My house is Calverley and Co.; Co. stands for "company," vous savvy,' said John, with a great dash at airing his French.

'Ah, you have partners?' asked Pauline.

'Well, no, not exactly,' said John evasively, looking over her head, and rattling the keys in his trousers-pockets.

'I think I heard of one Monsieur Claxton.'

'Eh,' said John, looking at her disconcertedly, 'Claxton, eh? O yes, of course.'

'And yet it is strange that, intimate, lié, bound up as this Monsieur Claxton must be with you in your affairs, you have never brought him to this house—Madame Calverley has never seen him. I should like to see this Monsieur Claxton, do you know? I should—'

But John Calverley stepped hurriedly forward and laid his hand upon her arm. 'Stay, for God's sake,' he said, with an expression of terror in every feature; 'I hear Mrs. Calverley's step on the stairs. Do not mention Mr. Claxton's name in this house; I will tell you why some other time—only—don't mention it!'

'I understand,' said Pauline quietly; and when Mrs. Calverley entered the room, she found her guest deeply absorbed in the photographic album.

That night the party broke up early. Mr. Calverley, though he used every means in his power to disguise the agitation into which his conversation with Pauline had thrown him, was absent and embarrassed; while Pauline

herself was so occupied in thought over what had occurred, and so desirous to be alone, in order that she might have the opportunity for full reflection, that she did not, as usual, encourage her hostess in the small and spiteful talk in which that lady delighted, and none were sorry when the clock, striking ten, gave them an excuse for an adjournment.

'Allons donc,' said Pauline, when she had once more regained her own chamber, 'I have made a great success to-night, by mere chance-work too, arising from my keeping my eyes and ears always open. See now! It is evident, from some cause or other—why, I cannot at present comprehend—that this man, Monsieur Calverley, is frightened to death lest his wife should see his partner! What does it matter to me, the why or the wherefore? The mere fact of its being so is sufficient to give me power over him. He is no fool; he sees the influence which I have already acquired over Mrs. Calverley, and he knows that were I just to drop a hint to that querulous being, that jealous wretch, she would insist on being

made known to Claxton, and having all the business transactions between them explained to her. Threaten Monsieur Calverley with that, and I can obtain from him what I will, can be put on Tom Durham's track, and then left to myself to work out my revenge in my own way! Ah, Monsieur and Madame Mogg, of Poland-street, how can I ever be sufficiently grateful for the chance which sent me to lodge in your mansarde, and first gave me the idea of making the acquaintance of the head of the great firm of Calverley and Company!'

The next morning, when, after breakfast, and before starting for the City, Mr. Calverley went into the dull square apartment behind the dining-room, dimly lighted by a window, overlooking the leads, which he called his study, where some score of unreadable books lay half reclining against each other on shelves, but the most used objects in which were a hat and clothes-brush, some walking-canes and umbrellas, he was surprised to find himself closely followed by Madame Du Tertre; more surprised when that lady closed the

door quietly, and turning to him said, with meaning:

'Now, monsieur, five words with you.'

'Certainly, madame,' said John very much taken aback; 'but is not this rather an odd place—would not Mrs. Calverley think—?'

'Ah, bah,' said Pauline, with a shrug and a gesture very much more reminiscent of the dame du comptoir than of the dame de compagnie. 'Mrs. Calverley has gone down-stairs to battle with those wretched servants, and she is, as you know, safe to be there for half an hour. What I have to say will not take ten minutes—shall I speak?'

John bowed in silence, looking at the same time anxiously towards the study-door.

'You do not know much of me, Monsieur Calverley, but you will before I have done. I am at present—and am, I fancy, likely to remain—an inmate of your house; I have established myself in Mrs. Calverley's good graces, and have, as you must know very well, a certain amount of influence with her; but it was you to whom I made my original ap-

peal; it is you whom I wish to retain as my friend.'

John Calverley, with flushing cheeks, and constantly-recurring glance towards the door, said, 'that he was very proud, and that if he only knew what Madame Du Tertre desired—'

'You shall know at once, Monsieur Calverley: I want you to accept me as your friend, and to prove that you do so by giving me your confidence.'

John Calverley started.

'Yes, your confidence,' continued Pauline. 'I have talent and energy, and, when I am trusted, could prove myself a friend worth having; but I am too proud to accept half-confidences, and where no trust is reposed in me I am apt to ally myself with the opposite faction. Why not trust in me, Monsieur Calverley—why not tell me all?'

'All—what all, madame?'

'About your partner, Monsieur Claxton, and the reason why you do not bring him—'

'Hush! pray be silent, I implore you!'

said John Calverley, stepping towards her and taking both her hands in his. 'I cannot imagine,' he said, after a moment's pause, 'what interest my business affairs can have for you; but since you seem to wish it, you shall know them all; only not here and not now.'

'Yes,' said Pauline, with provoking calmness, 'in the City, perhaps?'

'Yes; at my office in Mincing-lane.'

'And when?'

'To-morrow week, at four o'clock; come down there then, and I will tell you all you wish to know.'

'Right,' said Pauline, slipping out of the room in an instant. And before John Calverley let himself out at the street-door, he heard the drawing-room piano ringing out the grand march from the *Prophète* under her skilful hands.

Three days afterwards a man came up from the office with a letter for Mrs. Calverley. It was from her husband, stating he

had a telegram calling him down to Swartmoor at once, and requesting that his portmanteau might be packed and given to the messenger. This worthy was seen and interrogated by the mistress of the house. 'He knew nothing about the telegram,' he said, 'but when his master gave him the letter he looked bothered and dazed-like.'

Mrs. Calverley shook her head, and opined that her prophecies anent the downfall of the Swartmoor Ironworks were about to be realised. But Pauline did not seem to be much put out at the news. 'It is important, doubtless,' she said to herself, 'and he must go; but he will return in time to keep his appointment with me.'

The day arrived and the hour, and Pauline was punctual to her appointment, but Mr. Calverley had not arrived, though one of the clerks said he had left word that it was probable he might return on that day. That was enough for Pauline; she would await his arrival.

An hour passed.

Then there was a great tearing up and down stairs, and hurrying to and fro, and presently, when a white-faced clerk came in to get his hat, he stared to see her there. He had forgotten her, though it was he who had ushered her into the waiting-room.

'There was no use in her remaining there any longer,' he said; 'the head-clerk, Mr. Jeffreys, had been sent for to Great Walpole-street; and though nobody knew anything positive, everybody felt that something dreadful had occurred.'

CHAPTER XII.

'WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE.'

WHEN Alice first heard the news of Tom Durham's death, she was deeply and seriously grieved. Not that she had seen much of her half-brother at any period of her life, not that there was any special bond of sympathy between them, nor that the shifty, thriftless ne'er-do-well possessed any qualities likely to find much favour with a person of Alice's uprightness and rectitude of conduct. But the girl could not forget the old days when Tom, as a big strong lad, just returned from his first rough introduction to the world, would take her, a little delicate mite, and carry her aloft on his shoulders round the garden, and even deprive himself of the huge pipe and the strong tobacco which he took such pride in

smoking, because the smell was offensive to her. She could not forget that whenever he returned from his wanderings, short as his stay in England might be, he made a point of coming to see her, always bringing some little present, some quaint bit of foreign art-manufacture, which he knew would please her fancy; and though his purse was generally meagrely stocked, always asking her whether she was in want of money, and offering to share its contents with her. More vividly than all she recalled to mind his softness of manner and gentleness of tone, on the occasion of their last parting; she recollected how he had clasped her to his breast at the station, and how she had seen the tears falling down his cheeks as the train moved away; she remembered his very words: 'I am not going to be sentimental, it isn't in my line; but I think I like you better than anybody else in the world, though I didn't take to you much at first.' And again: 'So I love you, and I leave you with regret.' Poor Tom, poor dear Tom! such was the theme of Alice's daily reflection, invariably

ending in her breaking down and comforting herself with a good cry.

But, in addition to the loss of her brother, Alice Claxton had great cause for anxiety and mental disturbance. John had returned from his last business tour weary, dispirited, and obviously very much out of health. The brightness had faded from his blue eyes, the lines round them and his mouth seemed to have doubled both in number and depth, his stoop was considerably increased, and instead of his frank hearty bearing, he crept about, when he thought he was unobserved, with dawdling footsteps, and with an air of lassitude pervading his every movement. He strove his best to disguise his condition from Alice; he struggled hard to talk to her in his old cheerful way, to take interest in the details of her management of the house and garden, to hear little Bell her lessons, and to play about with the child on days when the weather rendered it possible for him to go into the shrubbery. But even during the time when Alice was talking or reading to

him, or when he was romping with the child, he would suddenly subside into a kind of half-dazed state, his eyes staring blankly before him, his hands dropped listlessly by his side; he would not reply until he had been spoken to twice or thrice, and would then look up as though he had either not heard or not understood the question addressed to him. If it was painful to Alice to see her husband in that state, it was far more distressing to observe his struggles to recover his consciousness, and his attempts at being more like his old self. In his endeavours to talk and laugh, to rally his young wife after his usual fashion, and to comprehend and be interested in the playful babble of the child, there was a ghastly galvanised vivacity most painful to behold.

Watching her husband day by day with the greatest interest and care, studying him so closely that she was enabled to anticipate his various changes of manner, and almost to foretell the next expression of his face, Alice Claxton became convinced that there was something seriously the matter with him, and

it was her duty, whether he wished it or not, to call in medical advice. Mr. Broadbent, the village apothecary, had had a great deal of experience, and was invariably spoken of as a clever, kind-hearted man. When the Claxtons first established themselves at Rose Cottage, the old-fashioned residents in the neighbourhood duly called and left their cards; but after John had consulted with Alice, telling her that he left her to do entirely as she thought fit in the matter, but that for his own part he had no desire to commence a new series of acquaintance, it was agreed between them that it would be sufficient to deliver cards in return, and all farther attempts at social intercourse were politely put aside and ignored. In such a village as Hendon was a few years ago, it was, however, impossible without actual rudeness to avoid the acquaintance of the vicar and the doctor, and consequently the Reverend Mr. Tomlinson and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Broadbent, were on visiting terms at Rose Cottage.

Visiting terms, so far as the Tomlinsons

were concerned, meant an interchange of dinners twice in the year; but Mr. Broadbent was seen, by Mrs. Claxton at least, far more frequently. The story of little Bell's adoption had got wind throughout the neighbourhood, and the spinsters and the gushing young ladies, who thought it 'so romantic,' unable to effect an entrance for themselves into the enchanted bower, anxiously sought information from Mr. Broadbent, who was, as they knew, a privileged person. The apothecary was by no means backward in purveying gossip for the edification of his fair hearers, and his eulogies of Mrs. Claxton's good looks, and his detailed descriptions of little Bell's infantile maladies, were received with much delight at nearly all the tea-tables in the neighbourhood. Whether John Claxton had heard of this, whether he had taken any personal dislike to Mr. Broadbent, or whether it was merely owing to his natural shyness and reserve, that he absented himself from the room on nearly every occasion of the doctor's visits, Alice could not tell; but such was the case. When they did meet,

they talked politely, and seemed on the best of terms; but John seemed to take care that their meetings should be as few as possible.

What was to be done? John had now been home three days, and was visibly worse than on his arrival. Alice had spoken to him once or twice, seriously imploring him to tell her what was the matter with him, but had been received the first time with a half-laugh, the second time with a grave frown. He was quite well, he said, quite well, so far as his bodily health was concerned; a little worried, he allowed; business worries, which a woman could not understand, matters connected with the firm which gave him a certain amount of anxiety—nothing more. Alice thought that this was not the whole truth, and that John, in his love for her, and desire to spare her any grief, had made light of what was really serious suffering. The more she thought over it, the more anxious and alarmed she became, and at length, when on the fourth morning after John's return, she had peeped into the little library and seen her husband

sitting there at the window, not heeding the glorious prospect before him, not heeding the book which lay upon his lap, but lying backwards in his chair, with his hands clasped behind his head, his eyes closed, his complexion a dull sodden red, she determined on at once sending for Mr. Broadbent, without saying a word to John about it. An excuse could easily be found; little Bell had a cold and was slightly feverish, and the doctor had been sent for to prescribe for her; and though he could see Mr. Claxton and have a talk with him, Alice would take care that John should not suspect that he was the object of Mr. Broadbent's visit.

Mr. Broadbent came, pleasant and chatty at first, imagining he had been sent for to see the little girl in one of the ordinary illnesses of childhood; graver and much less voluble as, on their way up to the nursery, Mrs. Claxton confided to him her real object in requesting his presence. Little Bell duly visited, the conspiring pair came down stairs again, and Alice going first, opened the door and dis-

covered Mr. Claxton in the attitude in which she had last seen him, fast asleep and breathing heavily. He roused himself at the noise on their entrance, rubbed his eyes, and rose wearily to his feet, covered with confusion as soon as he made out that Alice had a companion.

'Well, John,' cried Alice, with a well-feigned liveliness, 'you were asleep, I declare! See, here is Mr. Broadbent come to shake hands with you. He was good enough to come round and look at little Bell, who has a bad cold, poor child, and a little flushing in the skin, which frightened me; but Mr. Broadbent says it's nothing.'

'Nothing at all, Mr. Claxton, take my word for it,' said the doctor, who had by this time advanced into the room, and by a little skilful manœuvring had got his back to the window, while he had turned John Claxton, whose hand he held, with his face to the light; 'nothing at all, the merest nothing; but ladies, as you know, are even frightened at that, particularly where little ones are concerned.

Well, Mr. Claxton,' continued the doctor, who was a big jolly man, with a red face, a pair of black bushy whiskers, and a deep voice, 'and how do you find yourself, sir?'

'I am quite well, thank you, doctor,' said John Claxton, plucking up and striving to do his best; 'I may say quite well.'

'Lucky man not to find all your travelling knock you about,' said the doctor. 'I have known several men—commercials—who say they cannot stand the railway half so well as they used to do the old coaches—shakes them, jars them altogether. By the way, there is renewed talk about our having a railway here. Have you heard anything about it?'

'Not I,' said John Claxton, 'and I fervently hope it will not come in my time. I am content with old Davis's coach.'

'Ah,' said the doctor with a laugh, 'you must find old Davis's coach rather a contrast to some of the railways you are in the habit of scouring the country in, both in regard to speed and comfort. However, I must be off; glad to see you looking so well. Good-morn-

ing. Now, Mrs. Claxton,' added the doctor, as he shook hands with John, 'if you will just come with me, I should like to look at that last prescription I wrote for the little lady upstairs.'

No sooner were they in the dining-room, with the door closed behind them, than Alice laid her hand upon the doctor's arm, and looked up into his face pale and eager with anxiety.

'Well,' she said, 'how does he look? what do you think? Tell me at once.'

'It is impossible, my dear Mrs. Claxton,' said the good-natured apothecary, looking at her kindly, and speaking in a softened voice; 'it is impossible for me to judge of Mr. Claxton's state from a mere cursory glance and casual talk; but I am bound to say that, from what I could observe, I fancy he must be considerably out of health.'

'So I thought,' said Alice; 'so I feared.' And her tears fell fast.

'You must not give way, my dear madam,' said Mr. Broadbent. 'What I say may

be entirely unfounded. I am, recollect, only giving you my impression after a conversation with your husband, in which, at your express wish, I refrained from asking him anything about himself.'

'If I could manage to persuade him to see you, would you come in this afternoon or to-morrow morning, Mr. Broadbent?'

'I would, of course, do anything you wished; but as Mr. Claxton has never hitherto done me the honour to consult me professionally, and as it seems to me to be a case the diagnosis of which should be very carefully gone into, I would recommend that he should consult some physician of eminence. Possibly he knows such a one.'

'No,' said Alice, 'I have never heard him mention any physician since our marriage.'

'If that be the case, I would strongly advise you to call in Doctor Haughton. He is a man of the greatest eminence; and, as it happens, I see him every day just now, as we have a regular consultation at the Rookery—you know, the large place on the other side of

the village, where poor Mr. Piggott is lying dangerously ill. If you like, I will mention the case to Doctor Haughton when I see him to-morrow.'

'Thank you, Mr. Broadbent; I am deeply obliged to you, but I must speak to John first. I should not like to do anything without his knowledge. I will speak to him this afternoon, and send a note round to you in the evening.' And Mr. Broadbent, much graver and much less boisterous than usual, took his departure.

John Claxton remained pretty much in the same dozing kind of state during the day. He came in to luncheon, and made an effort to talk cheerfully upon the contents of the newspaper and suchlike topics, and afterwards he had a romp in the hall with little Bell, the weather being too raw for the child to go out of doors. But two or three turns at the battledore and shuttlecock, two or three spinnings of the big humming-top, two or three hidings behind the greatcoats, seemed to be enough for him, and he rang for the nurse to

take the child to her room just as the little one was beginning to enter into the sport of the various games. Alice had been in and out through the hall during the pastime, and saw the child go quietly off, bearing her disappointment bravely, and saw her husband turn listlessly into the library, his hands buried in the pockets of his shooting-jacket and his head sunk upon his breast. Poor little Alice! Her life for the last few years had been so bright and so full of sunshine ; her whole being was so bound up with that of her kind thoughtful husband, who had taken her from almost menial drudgery and made her the star and idol of his existence, that when she saw him fighting bravely against the illness which was bearing him down, and ever striving to hide it from her, she could not make head against the trouble, but retired into a corner of her pretty little drawing-room and wept bitterly.

Then when the fit of weeping was over, she roused herself, her brain cleared and her determination renewed. 'It is impossible that this can go on,' she said to herself; 'I have a

part and share in John's life now; it belongs to me almost as much as to him, and it is my duty to see that it is not endangered. He will be angry, I know, but I must bear his anger. After what Mr. Broadbent said this morning, it is impossible that I can allow matters to remain in their present state without acting upon the advice which he gave me; and be the result what it may, I will do so.'

The autumn twilight had fallen upon the garden, wrapping it in its dim grey folds, the heavy mists were beginning to rise from the damp earth, and the whole aspect outside was dreary and chilly. But when Alice entered the little library she found John Claxton standing at the window, with his head lying against the pane, and apparently rapt in the contemplation of the cheerless landscape.

'John,' she said, creeping close to him, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, 'John.'

'Yes, dear,' he replied, passing his arm round her and drawing her closely to him. 'You wondered what had become of me; you

came to reproach me for leaving you so long to yourself?'

'No, John, not that,' said Alice; 'there is nothing in the wide world for which I have to reproach you; there has been nothing since you first made me mistress of your house.'

'And of my heart, Alice; don't forget that,' said her husband, tenderly; 'of my heart.'

'And of your heart,' she repeated. 'But when you gave me that position you expected me to take with it its responsibilities as well as its happiness, did you not? You did not bring me here to be merely a toy or a plaything—no, I don't mean that exactly; I mean not merely to be something for your petting and your amusement—you meant me to be your wife, John; to share with you your troubles and anxieties, and to have a voice of my own, a very little one, in the regulation of all things in which you were concerned?'

'Certainly, Alice,' said her husband; 'have I not shown this?'

'Always before, John, always up to within

the last few days. And if you are not doing so now, it is, I know, from no lack of love, but rather out of care and thoughtfulness for me.'

'Why, Alice,' said John, with a struggle to revive his old playful manner, 'what is the matter with you? How grave the little woman is to-night.'

'Yes, John; I am grave, because I know you are ill, and that you are striving to hide it from me lest I should be alarmed. That is not the way it should be, John; you know we swore to be loyal to each other in sickness as well as in health, and it would be my pride as well as my duty to take up my place by you in sickness and be your nurse.'

'I want no nurse, little woman,' he said, bending tenderly over her. 'As I told you this morning, I am quite well; only a little—' And then his brain reeled, and his legs tottered beneath him, and had he not caught hold of the chair standing at his elbow, he would have fallen to the ground.

'You are ill, John; there is the proof,'

Alice cried, after he had seated himself and thrown himself heavily back in the chair. She knelt by his side, bathing his forehead with eau-de-cologne. 'You are ill, and must be attended to at once. Now listen; do you understand me?'

A feeble pressure of her hand intimated assent.

'Well, then, Mr. Broadbent mentioned quite by accident this morning that a celebrated London physician, a Doctor Haughton I think he called him, was in the habit of coming up here every day just now to visit Mr. Piggott at the Rookery; and it struck me at the time that it would be a very good plan if we could send round to the Rookery and ask this Doctor Haughton to call in as he was passing and see you.'

'No!' cried John Claxton in a loud voice, as he started up in his chair; 'no, I forbid you distinctly to do anything of the kind. I will have no strange doctor admitted into this house. Understand, Alice, these are my orders, and I insist on their being obeyed.'

'That is quite enough, John,' said Alice; 'you know that your will is my law; still I hope to make you think better of it for your own sake and for mine.'

They said no more about it just then. Alice remained kneeling by her husband, holding his hand in hers, and softly smoothing his hair, and bathing his forehead, until the dinner was announced. The threat of calling in Doctor Haughton seemed to have had an inspiriting effect on the invalid. He ate and drank more than he had done on the three previous days, and talked more freely and with greater gaiety. So comparatively lively was he, that Alice began to hope that he had been merely suffering, as he had said, under an accumulation of business worries, and that with a little rest and quiet he would recover his ordinary health and spirits.

Quite late in the evening, as they were sitting together in the library, John began talking to his wife about Tom Durham. He had scarcely touched upon the subject since the news of the unfortunate man's death had

arrived in England, and even now he introduced it cautiously and with becoming reverence.

'Of course it was a sad blow,' he said, 'and just now it seems very hard for you to bear; but don't think I have failed to notice, Alice, how, in your love and care for me, you have set aside your own grief lest the sight of your sorrow should distress me.'

'I don't know that I deserve any gratitude for that, John; my care for you is so very much greater than any other feeling which can possibly enter into my mind, that it stands apart and alone, and I cannot measure others by it. And yet I was very fond of poor Tom,' she said, pensively.

'It will be a comfort for us to think, not now so much as hereafter, that we did our best to start him in an honest career, and to give him the chance of achieving a good position,' said John Claxton. 'He had seen a great many of the ups and downs of life, had poor Tom Durham.'

'He was a strange mixture of good and

evil,' said Alice; 'but to me he was always uniformly kind and affectionate. He had a strange regard for me, as being, I suppose, something totally different from what he was usually brought in contact with; he took care that I should see nothing but the best and brightest side of him, though of course I knew from others that he was full of faults.'

'And you loved him all the same?'

'And yet, as you say, I loved him all the same.'

'And nothing you could hear now would alter your opinion of him?'

'No, John, I think—I am sure not. I am a strange being, and this is one of my characteristics, that no fault known at the time or discovered afterwards, could in the slightest degree influence my feelings towards one whom I had really loved.'

'You are sure of that, Alice?' said John Claxton, bending down and looking earnestly at her.

'Quite sure,' she replied.

'That is one of the sweetest traits in your

sweet self,' said her husband, kissing her fervently.

The next morning Mr. Claxton's improvement seemed to continue. He was up tolerably early, ate a good breakfast, and talked with all his accustomed spirit. Alice began to think that she had been precipitate in her idea of calling in medical advice, particularly in sending for a stranger like Doctor Haughton, and was glad that John had overruled her in the matter. Later in the morning, the air being tolerably mild, and the sun shining, he went with little Bell into the garden, first walking quietly round the paths, and afterwards, in compliance with the child's request, giving himself up for a romping game at play. It was while engaged in this game that John Claxton felt as though he had suddenly lost his intellect, that everything was whirling round him in wild chaotic disorder, then that he was stricken blind and deaf, then that with one great blow depriving him almost of life, he was smitten to the earth. On the earth he lay; while the child, conceiving this to be

a part of the game, ran off with shrieks of delight to some new hiding-place. On the earth he lay, how long he knew not, having only the consciousness, when he came to himself, of being dazed and stunned, and sore all over, as though he had been severely beaten.

John Claxton knew what this meant. He felt it would be almost impossible any longer to hide the state in which he was from the eager anxious eyes of his wife. He would make one more attempt, however; so, bracing himself together, he managed to proceed with tolerable steadiness towards the house. Alice came out to meet him, beaming with happiness.

'What has become of you, you silly John?' she cried. 'I have been looking for you everywhere. Bell told me she left you hiding somewhere in the garden, and I have just sent up for my cloak, determined to search for you myself.'

'Bell was quite right, dear,' said John, slowly and with great effort. 'I was hiding, as she said; but as she did not come to find

me, I thought I had better make the best of my way without her.'

'Not before you were required, sir. I was waiting for you to give me my monthly cheque. Don't you know that to-day is the twenty-fourth, when I always pay my old pensioners and garden people?'

'Is to-day the twenty-fourth?' asked John Claxton, his face flushing very red, as he fumbled in his pocket for his note-book.

'Certainly, John. Thursday the twenty-fourth, and—'

'I must go,' said John Claxton hoarsely, after he had found his note-book and looked into it; 'I must go to London at once.'

'To London, John?'

'Yes, at once; particular appointment with Mr. Calverley for to-day. I cannot think how I have forgotten it; but I must go.'

'You are not well enough to go, John; you must not.'

'I tell you I must and will!' said John Claxton fiercely. 'I shall come back to-night; or, if I have to go off out of town, I will tell

you where to send my portmanteau. Don't be angry, dear. I didn't mean to be cross—I didn't indeed; but business—most important business.'

He spoke thickly and hurriedly, his veins were swollen, and his eyes seemed starting out of his head.

'Won't you wait for Davis's coach, John?' said Alice softly. 'It will start in half an hour.'

'No, no; let it pick me up on the road. Tell Davis to look out for me; a little walk will do me good. Give me my hat and coat; and now, God bless you, my darling. You are not angry with me? Let me hear that before I start.'

'I never was angry with you, John. I never could be angry with you so long as I live.'

He wound his arms around her and held her to his heart; then with rapid shambling steps he started off down the high-road. He walked on and on; he must have gone, he thought, at least two miles; would the coach

never come? The excitement which sustained him at first now began to fail him; he felt his legs tottering under him; then suddenly the blindness and the deafness came on him again, the singing in his ears, the surging in his brain; and he fell by the roadside, helpless and senseless.

The delightfully-interesting case of Mr. Piggott of the Rookery had brought together Doctor Haughton and Mr. Broadbent after a separation of many years, and had given them the opportunity to renew the old friendship which had been interrupted since their student days at St. George's. Nature was kind to them, and Mr. Piggott, and the case was pleasantly progressing, when one day Doctor Haughton received a letter from Broadbent, who was in Seville, and who wrote to some old friends of his in the neighbourhood, telling them that he was coming

you where to send my portmanteau. Don't be angry, dear. I didn't mean to be cross—I didn't indeed; but business—most important business.'

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The delightfully-interesting case of Mr. Piggott of the Rookery had brought together Doctor Haughton and Mr. Broadbent, after a separation of many years, and led them to renew the old friendship, which had been interrupted since their student days at St. George's. Nature was not doing much for Mr. Piggott, and the case was likely to be pleasantly protracted; so that on this very day Doctor Haughton had asked Mr. Broadbent to come and dine and sleep at his house in Saville-row, where he would meet with some old friends and several distinguished members of the profession; and the pair were rolling easily into town in Doctor Haughton's carriage, with the black bag, containing Mr.

Broadbent's evening dress, carefully placed under the coachman's legs.

What is this? A knot of people gathered by the roadside, all craning forward eagerly, and looking at something on the ground. The coachman's practisèd eye detects an accident instantly, and he whips up his horses and stops them just abreast of the crowd.

'What is it?' cried the coachman.

'Man in a fit,' cried one of the crowd.

'That be blowed,' said another; 'he won't have any more of such fits as them, I reckon. The man's dead; that's what he is.'

Hearing these words Mr. Broadbent opened the door and pushed his way among the crowd. Instantly he returned, his face full of horror.

'Good God!' he said to his companion, 'who do you think it is? The man—the very man about whom I was speaking to you just now—Claxton.'

Doctor Haughton descended from the carriage in a more leisurely and professional manner, stepped among the people, who

made way for him right and left, knelt by the prostrate body, lifted its arms and applied his fingers to its wrists. Then he shook his head.

'The man is dead,' he said; 'there can be no doubt about that.' And he bent forward to look at the features. Instantly recognising him, he sprang back. 'Who did you say this man was?' he said, turning to Mr. Broadbent.

'Claxton—Mr. Claxton, of Rose Cottage.'

'Nothing of the sort,' said the doctor. 'I knew him well; it is Mr. Calverley, of Great Walpole-street.'

'My good sir,' said Mr. Broadbent, 'I knew the man well. I saw him only yesterday.'

'And I knew Mr. Calverley well. He was one of Chipchase's patients, and I attended him when Chipchase was out of town. We can soon settle this—Here, you lad, just stand at those horses' heads—Gibson,' to his coachman, 'get down, and come here. Did you ever see that gentleman before?' pointing to the body.

The man bent forward and took a long and solemn stare.

'Certainly, sir,' he replied at length, touching his hat; 'Mr. Calverley, sir, of Great Walpole-street. Seen him a score of times.'

'What do you think of that?' said Doctor Haughton, turning to his companion.

'Think!' said Mr. Broadbent, 'I will tell you what I think—that Mr. Claxton of Rose Cottage and Mr. Calverley of Great Walpole-street were one and the same man!'

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